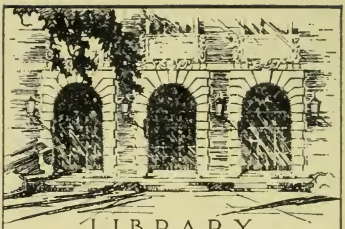

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WOMAN.

A SKETCH.

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WOMAN;

OR,

MINOR MAXIMS.

A Sketch.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

Those thousand decencies that daily flow
From all her words and actions. MILTON.

VOL. I.

London:

Printed at the Minerva Press for

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1818.

THE following Work was written for the amusement of a home-circle; but the Author could not give it a permanent form, without, at the same time, presenting it to the Public.

Fortunate in her associates, she feels that her amiable characters are drawn from Life—her less amiable ones the creatures of Fancy.

WOMAN.

CHAPTER I.

Good-breeding.

WE are about to introduce our readers into very "good company"—good company, in every meaning of that phrase—the titled and the wealthy, the wise and the virtuous. It will be as well, therefore, to risk a few preliminary remarks on the nature of that bond of society, good-breeding, to ensure our *dramatis personæ* a polite, if not a cordial reception.

Good-breeding is defined by Mr. Locke, as consisting in the possession of a due degree of respect for ourselves, combined with a due degree of respect for others.

Now this definition supposes the absence of both pride and false shame, and admits not the presence either of the assumption of unjust consequence for ourselves, or of humiliating views of our neighbours. It implies self-possession in the intercourse of society, unimpaired by servility to the great, or exultation over the lowly; it denotes an innate dignity, that remains the same in all the vicissitudes of life—in poverty and in opulence, in obscurity and in celebrity—giving honour to whom honour is due, yet preserving a just sense of our own rank, and of our own rights. Hence it appears that good-breeding is compatible with every station, and may be exercised under every circumstance of social communion: the rustic labourer, who stands aside to prevent his implements of toil from incommoding the passer by—the cottager's wife, who adds a faggot to her dying fire, and dusts a chair, to accommodate the cold and wearied traveller—are each as truly well-bred as the gentlewoman,

man, who gives precedence to her guest, or forbears to contradict her opponent.

Good-breeding, then, in its genuine form, is only the most refined expression of benevolence, mingled with a certain proportion of self-dignity. This last sentence seems to mark its distinction from "high-breeding;" for if "high-breeding" be the name for the manners of courts and courtiers, it is plain it wants the essentials of the quality we are discussing, inasmuch as good-breeding is incompatible with servility or arrogance.

Now let it be understood, that when we talk of the manners of courts and courtiers, we mean the studied civilities and heartless professions generally ascribed to that region of greatness—manners which are, however, to be found in every gradation downwards, as good-breeding may be seen in its purest form amid crowns and coronets.

Good-breeding may be deemed the happy medium between high-breeding and

vulgarity—partaking of the polish of the one, with the sincerity of the other; for as the great world gives a name to a certain style of behaviour, so does the lowly world confer a title on certain modes of demeanour. To be vulgar, however (that is, to be coarse, selfish, uncomplying), is no more a privilege confined to poverty and rusticity, than to be well-bred (that is, to be courteous, disinterested, obliging) is a prerogative peculiar to wealth and titles: a duchess may be as grossly vulgar as her dairy-maid, and a village-girl as well-bred as a countess—at least in Mr. Locke's definition of that term.

As good-breeding seems to be the great cement of society, binding man to man, in all the charities of life, we are very solicitous to mark its peculiar attributes, and by representing its diffusive powers of benefiting, to enforce its cultivation.

Let not the quality we recommend be confounded with "modish manners," those ephemera with which the heart has nothing

thing to do—which are assumed and resigned with the fashionable costume of the day, and generally as frivolous and as fantastic as they. It would be in vain to describe the Proteus-forms in which Fashion displays her changeful garb and guise; now urging her votaries, with riding-habits, riding-hats, and riding-whips, to affect masculine tones, language, and action—now with flowing veils and graceful drapery, downcast eyes and mincing steps, pretending to more than womanly softness.

This may be all very "tonnish," but this we contend is not good-breeding; for whilst tonnish manners change with every hour, and suit only certain stations and certain circumstances, good-breeding is always one and the same thing, adapted to all persons, and appropriate to all places, never exposing its professors to the risk of contempt from its obsoleteness, nor holding them up to ridicule from its novelty.

We are viewing the subject in its most extended sense, for we are particularly

anxious to be understood to deal in generals, and not in personals, not only in this, but in every part of our present work: we do not propose to talk of persons, but of things—not of men, but of manners—not of individuals, but of society in general—not as satirists, lashing fools and folly, to shew our wit and our acumen, at the expence of our benevolence, but as moralists, seeking to develop and to recommend those qualities most friendly to social enjoyment.

Under the auspices of genuine good-breeding, we beg to introduce "Woman" to society; and as this quality inculcates peculiar courtesy to a stranger—most especially when that stranger is a woman—above all, when she appears trembling at the awfulness of the introduction, and blushing with a consciousness of self-demerit, we trust she will receive a pitying welcome.

CHAP-

CHAPTER II.

The Dramatis Personæ.

THE family of the Wrongheads were an epitome of the world—their vices were fewer than their frailties, and their frailties more numerous than their virtues.

Lady Wronghead, the head—yes, we are right, the head* of this illustrious house, was a very clever woman—in her own opinion at least, notable, shrewd, spirited. Sir Gabriel Wronghead, the master—no, that will not do, he was *not* the master—the head has been already appropriated; had not our grammar informed us that master† is a term of the masculine gender,

* Does not the head mean the chief, or *governing* power?

† We beg our readers will not augur unfavourably of our talents by this avowal. We may not be the only persons that require a grammar to ascertain the true gender of the word master.

it had better served our turn before. But to return—for we hate digressions, unless we cannot avoid them, which we fear will be pretty often—sir Gabriel Wronghead was the manly representative of the noble family of Wrongheads, a family who, the learned believe, will never become extinct, and have existed from the creation of the world. Sir Gabriel, indeed, dated the origin of his branch of it in a clear and unbroken line from one of the sons of Adam, and indeed would have been happy in fixing on a more ancient pedigree, could it have been conveniently done.

To preserve a race of such high antiquity, he, early in life, married the daughter of a wealthy citizen, a man of yesterday, whose riches in some degree compensated for an ignoble* lineage—sir Gabriel wisely remembering, that let him marry whom he would, his children must all, *bona fide*, be

* From this remark, it should seem that the lady was not, like sir Gabriel, a direct or indirect descendant of Adam.

be Wrongheads. His prudential scheme was crowned with success—a numerous progeny encircled his board. His house was large, his appointments were liberal, and sorrow, or rather causes for sorrow, seldom invaded Random Hall.

Timotheus Adam Wronghead, Esquire (probably taking his second name from his great progenitor), was the hopeful heir. He was—or shall we say, he ought to have been, a most elegant young gentleman, for he had been to at least half-a-dozen of the most fashionable public and private seminaries—had spent a few months at Eton, and rather more at college—talked of Latin (the sign of the genitive case is not here obtruded by mistake), and thought himself at all points a finished beau.

A tour on the continent had benefited him in more ways than one; for besides causing him to speak a dialect, which his mother often exultingly remarked was made up of French, Italian, Spanish, and German, he was thereby entitled to the

enviable privilege of enriching his conversation with the erudite remark, "when I was abroad," a delicious insignia of travelled knowledge, most especially for one who had no other.

The paucity of his foreign acquirements might possibly be owing to the rapidity of his movements, having completed the grand tour, in an English phaeton, with a pair of spanking greys, in something less than three months—or it might probably arise from his almost total ignorance of the language of the countries he visited, his pertinacious adherence to English associates and English habits during the whole journey, and his profound contempt for whoever and whatever was not English.

A curious metamorphosis, however, took place on his return to his native land—the countries, the climes, the people, the customs, he had despised when amidst them, he rapturously applauded when distant from them. However, he had "been abroad," and that was enough for himself,

for

for his lady mother—in short, for all persons of taste and fashion.

And here we cannot help applauding that liberal spirit, which leads our countrymen generously to prefer an acquaintance with the soil, productions, government, and customs of foreign countries, rather than of their own. It is highly edifying to hear youths, who have not seen an acre of British ground beyond their father's park, and who would deem it vulgar to know any thing of Wales, Scotland, Ireland, and England, very proudly and learnedly descant on the ragouts of France, the olios of Spain, and the caviare of Italy.

Jack, the second son, was a sad, good-for-nothing fellow: he had been neither at Eton nor college, had visited neither Paris nor Rome, consequently could talk neither of Latin nor of Greek, neither of ragouts nor of olios, and was so often caught laughing at the erudition of his brother, and the accomplishments of his sister, that he was pronounced by both an ill-mannered

ed boor. Jack had one good friend always on his side—an uncle, Mr. Knowlesdon, his father's brother by a second marriage. Jack had no other learning than what he had received at a school in the neighbouring town, and at fifteen he had entered the navy, with a clear head, a warm heart, and an empty purse.

Clementina Henrietta Maria Wronghead—for who would not have plenty of names, when twenty may be had for the same expence as one, and the Muddleton system always recommended getting a pennyworth for a penny?—Clementina Henrietta Maria Wronghead was a sweet young woman, so accomplished, so attractive, so elegant—she had been so very well educated, *i. e.* no money had been spared, but the most expensive French academies, "Italian establishments," "musical seminaries," "painting schools," had in turns received her as a pupil: thus she had learnt, or, more correctly speaking, she had been taught *every thing*, and returned home a proficient

proficient in all. Such charming painted screens, with groupes of blue, red, green, and yellow shells in the middle, judiciously bordered with corresponding coloured fruits and flowers, a happy specimen of chaste design, uniting, in one view, things that never met before—such richly-worked gowns*, that after long regaling the imagination with the anticipation of the conquests they would ensure, were finished when their pattern was obsolete—such songs, such sonatas, needing only the trivial advantages of good voice, good time, and good taste, to be exquisite specimens of musical talents—such paintings of towers and castles, that gracefully departing from the perpendicular, gave an admirable idea of the pending church-steeple at Pisa—such voluble French, such elegant Italian, such learned English! had but

* Our pen stood arrested for some moments, ere we could remember what articles of dress the ladies had left themselves to work, tuckers and handkerchiefs having been long out of use.

but her superior genius stooped to wear the trammels of grammar, correct pronunciation, and just idiom, no young lady in the world could have more eloquently spoken those languages—her dancing was divine, needing only the trifling appendages of grace, ease, and lightness, to be perfect.

Then there were the sweet little Julia Josephina, and the playful Sophia Sophonisba, and the pensive Matilda Mariamna, three charming young girls, intended to be educated by their accomplished sister—an admirable arrangement, since not any thing can be more likely than that young ladies, after a long tedious course of learning, shall willingly undertake a long tedious course of teaching, and after having been expressly educated for exhibition, shall contentedly relinquish balls, routs, and theatres, and devote themselves to the seclusion and sobriety of tuition.

A fine little boy, the darling of mamma, and the pride of papa, was the youngest

youngest of the family—a dear, spirited fellow, that would always have his own way, so that there was little doubt, as his mamma sagaciously observed, he would make his way in the world.

Miss Patty Muddleton, a blushing virgin of——we really cannot say what age, herself modestly declining all inquiries on that point, and having lost all recollection of the progress of time, since she entered her teens some thirty years past—Miss Patty Muddleton was the elder sister of lady Wronghead, and had condescended to introduce herself and her charms into Random Hall, on the death of her parents.

Nature had done little for this lady, education still less—but we will allow her accomplishments to develop themselves—a disclosure easily effected, since, having been born at an era when French, music, dancing, drawing, &c. &c. were not, as now, *necessary* parts of education to all ranks and all degrees, she really could do little more than talk about them.

As

As all single ladies are of course young, and as a good fortune gave her every right to be married, Miss Patty naturally concluded she was still youthful, and still an object worthy the softer passion; besides, never once having had a wooer at her feet, and hearing from all quarters that every fair one had, at some period of life, a lover, she lived in a sweet delirium of tender hopes and soft desires.

Mr. Knowlesdon's family also boasted of its unmarried inmate—Mrs. Mary Knowlesdon, a personage of very inferior consequence to Miss Patty Muddleton, for besides a ridiculous weakness of confessing her age to all inquirers, though that age counted more years than forty, she had most imprudently assumed the title of Mrs. which, being considerably Miss Patty's junior, that young lady wisely conceived was highly injudicious. Indeed this arrogation of the matronly designation very naturally led the maiden of Random Hall to believe there must be some mistake in

dates,

dates, and that she must be younger than the spinster of Woodleigh Manor.

But Miss Patty had no reason to fear that any casual observer would draw disagreeable parallels between her and Mrs. Mary Knowlesdon—the thing was as impossible as placing the rugged unlovely rocks of Nova Zembla on the same degree of latitude with the calm landscapes of England.

Mrs. Mary was more rich in virtue than in wealth, another striking opposition of her fate and character to that of Miss Patty. But though her fortune was contracted, the sphere of her usefulness was extensive. Many years had she proved the tender companion, the assiduous nurse, of parents now shrouded in the grave. At their death, she had transferred her attention to their child. Mrs. Rachael Wronghead had been an invalid from the cradle, and now, in advanced life, added the petulance of age to the imbecility of infancy—irritable, discontented, exacting, her deformed

formed and sickly body seemed to demand that kindness her peevish temper and ill-regulated mind repelled.

Lady Wronghead, in all the ardour of new-born pity, requested that her husband's sister might remain at Random Hall after the death of her parents, and she would pledge herself to watch her with warm and *undecaying* tenderness. In something less than a week, lady Wronghead began to talk of the unlucky multiplicity of her maternal duties, that compelled her to be less attentive than she wished to her dear invalid; in another week, poor Rachael was found to be sadly in the way; the third week caught the lady expatiating on the mercy of early death, to "persons of bad health and bad tempers;" the end of the month saw Mrs. Rachael comfortably established in the best chamber at Woodleigh Manor, just in time to save lady Wronghead from the charge of "hard unkindness' altered eye."

When

When Mr. Knowlesdon urged the removal of the sufferer, lady Wronghead professed herself the more willing to acquiesce, "because certainly single women had nothing to do, whilst married women, poor souls! had so much to do."

"Ay, but do they always do all they have to do?" thought the solicitor, and his mind ran over the *business* of lady Wronghead, and the *idleness* of Mrs. Mary Knowlesdon.

Lady Wronghead did *not* keep her house—she did *not* educate her children—she did *not* read—she did *not* work—she did *not* visit the poor—she did *not* conduce to the comfort of any human being, not even of her husband.

Mrs. Mary Knowlesdon did keep one brother's house—she did educate another brother's child—she did work—she did read—she did visit the poor—she did conduce to the comfort of many human beings, though not of a husband.

In the last point only did the ladies accord

cord, though small is the verbal difference of the above sketches, one pitiful monosyllable making all the distinction. But what said sir Gabriel to the real effect of that interposing little word?

Justly might lady Wronghead descant on the vast, vast dissimilarity between married ladies and single women. How far, in this instance, the advantage was on the side of the wife—how far marriage *neccssarily* produces a more useful, a more respectable, a more agreeable member of society, the reader shall decide—Some materials for assisting his judgment are before him.

CHAP-

CHAPTER III.

Love and Poesy.

Susan Knowlesdon was the only child of doting parents. Mrs. Knowlesdon, mistaking indolence for inability, had pronounced herself incapable of educating her little girl. Her husband remonstrated —"You can teach her to be good and happy, the only right aim of education." Mrs. Knowlesdon could not or would not understand this plain reasoning. Susan was sent to a boarding-school—let us make no mistakes—not to be educated, only to be rendered accomplished. This limited plan was fulfilled—Susan danced, painted, touched the harp, spoke French, and warbled Italian to perfection. But her heart —her mind?—Madame Santange had nothing to do with these—the senses and the limbs

limbs were all that she undertook to tutor, and she had faithfully discharged her trust.

It was unlucky, that among so many respectable seminaries, superintended by women of talent and virtue, it was unlucky that Mrs. Knowlesdon did not choose, but that, caught by a name, she sent her daughter to a fashionable academy, directed by a foreigner.

Unhappily the affections and intellects will not remain quiescent because uncultivated. Susan's passions throve as luxuriantly as her faculties wantoned aimlessly; her gentleness degenerated into weakness, her diffidence into cowardice, her tenderness into false sensibility; the sportiveness of fancy, that, guided aright, might have enlivened her character, exhausted itself in the dreams of fiction, and the anticipation of impossibilities. The love of reading, so valuable as a medium of knowledge, was palled by the sickening trash of circulating libraries: to weep at the woes of a Monimia, and shriek at the gallantry of a Lothario,

a Lothario, were all the uses of Susan's susceptibility, and to display was all the aim of her accomplishments.

Her friendship and her love, guided by the example of the most approved heroines of romance, very early expanded. It was impossible to be at school without a *friend*—it was impossible to have a friend without a secret—it was impossible to have a secret without a lover. Susan Knowlesdon was well provided with all three. At the playhouse she saw the divinely handsome cornet Augustus Frederick Montgomery; she had long known that love at first sight was a proof of exquisite sensibility—accordingly she fell in love: to weep and sigh in secret were also indispensable characteristics of the tender passion—therefore she wept and sighed. But as this secrecy requires only so much concealment as the more surely to inspire suspicion and rouse curiosity, Susan contrived to have her tears and sighs discovered and remarked.

The

The sensitive Louisa Sophia Denton saw and understood the mysterious melancholy—with blushes, hesitation, averted eyes, Susan poured her sorrows into the faithful bosom of her friend. The fair Louisa was also most fortunately miserably in love—her swain a brother-officer of the killing cornet's, lieutenant Horatio Julius Villars—Nothing could be more apropos. The friendship was sealed for life, whilst nods, looks, and whispers, gave the usual external evidences of its hidden faithfulness.

The two favoured heroes were unconscious of the conquest their charms had made—they had never even spoken to their lovely victims; but as love is an immaterial essence, like perfume, penetrating by an invisible agency, so, as the young ladies received the precious poison through the eyes, there was no doubt but that the young gentlemen were infected through the same avenue.

It was a pleasure, though a plague, to sit

sit in the cold chamber, and peep down on the passing cornet or mounted lieutenant, to gaze on the waving plume, and charm away the sense of misery, in thinking of the polished spur and glistening boot! Then too the sweet trepidation of hope—the delicious misery of despair!

Miss Knowlesdon was called to a visitor—"Who, Betty, who?"

"A gentleman, ma'am."

There could be but one gentleman in the world—Susan, justly agitated, leant on the bannisters for support; at length, making an effort, she tremulously asked—"How is he dressed?"

"I really forget."

"In red?"

"No, ma'am, some dark colour."

"A disguise, no doubt," thought Susan.

A second summons—she roused her fortitude for the awful occasion, and rushed desperately forwards—the door flew open to her touch, and she found herself in the arms of her——father!

The swollen tide of expectation, with which she rushed* into the room, subsided in a moment, and left her stranded on the shallows of disappointment! Love, every body knows, is a deity that admits no division of worship. Susan was his genuine votary, and at that moment thought filial duty a cold ungraceful sentiment, unworthy her ardent and exquisite sensibility. Anybody can love fathers and mothers—heroines ought not to indulge such ignoble commonplace attachments!—"Papa! is it you?" exclaimed the mortified girl, weeping in very vexation of spirit. Her father fondly embraced her, and kissing off the tears that he believed marked the tenderness of his daughter's filial attachment, tenderly inquired after her health. Susan experienced something very like remorse, as she felt his kind pressure, saw his glistening eye, and heard his

* How delightfully *floated* would have served our turn! but we feared our readers would ask on what the lady floated?

his generous anticipation of her wishes, his ready compliance with her requests.

Miss Denton was a rich heiress; and having told her secret to another dear faithful friend, that other dear faithful friend told it as an excellent joke to all her acquaintance. In due time the secret was well known at the military mess, and the sighing fair was rather ungenteelly ridiculed. However, the lieutenant wisely profited by the information he had received, and very soon had the felicity to receive his charmer through the pantry window, and make her and her fortune his own, under the auspices of the celebrated blacksmith of Gretna Green.

Of course the lady's love ceased *after* she was married: this was as it should be. The causes of the first declension of her love were to be sure a little provoking—the name of her beloved was not Horatio Julius Villars, a lieutenant of guards, but Higgins Jonathan Willars, a surgeon to a regiment. How often did Mrs. Higgins

Willars lament that she had so carelessly explained the initials H. J. attached to a name she supposed Villars, on a scrap of paper that fell from the hand of the surgeon on the parade, and which a kind friend had picked up and conveyed to her delighted sight!

Poor Susan perhaps escaped an equally blissful fate, by being removed from school. But her secret was soon disclosed. Shortly after her return home, her father discovered more unequivocal proofs of her lovesick heart, than even pale cheeks and mournful glances: on one of the pages of the new drawing-book that he had lately given her, amidst multitudinous sketches of military caps, feathers, sabres, handsome-nosed profiles, and couplets beginning with Oh! Ah! and Alas! he deciphered the following sonnet, which, as a happy sample of the poetic effusions of exquisite sensibility, we copy for the edification of our youthful readers:—

" *SONNET TO SPRING.*

" All Nature owns thy power, enchanting Spring!
And smiles beneath the magic of thy touch;
The softened gales a milder influence fling,
Shedding fresh odours at thy loved approach.
Each fragrant shrub expands with brightened hue;
The early lilac, with its clustered flower,
Hyacinthus opes its eye of mildest blue,
And gay megerean glittering in the shower:
All greet thy coming! E'en the tender grass,
Bespangled o'er with dew-drops, sheds its brown,
And wears thy gayer livery. But, alas!
For me thou hast no charm; for can thy power
Retint the joys that are for ever flown,
Or to my heart its withered peace restore?"

Mr. Knowlesdon was yet spelling out this elegant *morceau*, and trying to sound in euphony the awkward " brown and flown," " power and restore," when Mrs. Knowlesdon flew down stairs with an old French grammar, the inside cover of which displayed what the good lady pronounced a most wonderful proof of the transcendant genius of her darling Susan;

and though Mr. Knowlesdon shook his head as he perused it, and pointed out more than one defect, we are tempted to introduce it here, as a further evidence, if any further evidence be wanted, that love is the inspirer of poesy, and that young ladies can talk very charmingly of "eternal sighs," and as pathetically descant on anticipated miseries as their elders.

"*SONNET TO A SNOW-DROP.*

"ON THE ABSENCE OF * * * * * * * *.

"Say, lovely flower! why droops thy beauteous head?
Why on thy snowy breast distils the tear?
Why 'neath the covert of the wood you rear
Your tender frame, and all your graces spread?
Is it the absence of the sun you mourn,
Whose cheering presence every tear could dry?
You mourn his absence, yet to shades you fly,
And screen your beauties from his wished return.
Alas! fair flower, my fate in thine I see;
For far away my guiding planet fled;
Like thee I weep, and various too like thee,
From that dear influence, which I prize so high,
When near it shone, with timid step I sped,
Though now its absence prompts the eternal sigh."

On

On farther investigation of the feelings that inspired these delectable effusions, Mr. Knowlesdon found that his daughter advocated rather than excused her folly, and was more proud of her poetry than ashamed of her passion. Her mother gloried in the brilliancy of her accomplishments—her father sighed over the wreck of her virtues. Her uncle no sooner heard the little history of her weakness, than he hastened to snatch her from further dereliction, by removing her from her tender mother, and placing her under the care of her maiden aunt.

CHAPTER IV.

The Progress of Rumour.

The dinner had waited a very fashionable time for the elegant Miss Wronghead, and the equally elegant Adam Wronghead,

Esq. and sir Gabriel had just sworn it should be ordered in—an order, however, which the butler, with a just respect to subordination, utterly disregarded, when the appearance of the belle and the beau settled the matter. Lady Wronghead gave the word, and the dinner appeared.

As the members of the family had been dispersed in different directions all the morning, each had something to impart.

Lady Wronghead, after, as usual, kindly discovering and announcing every defect in every dish on the table, and as usual finishing the detail by lamenting the delicacy of her senses, and the misfortunes of her lot, asked sir Gabriel if he had heard that Thurleston Abbey was let?

"Yes, my dear, I heard the report, and I fancy the family are coming immediately, for I saw all the windows of the abbey open."

"It is let to a gentleman of large fortune and good family, I can assure you," said the lady.

"Ay,

"Ay, for a long lease," observed the heir.

"There are innumerable children," murmured Miss Clementina; "I am charmed to think we shall at last have some society—the natives* of this place are all such boors."

"I do purtest," said Miss Muddleton, "I have an *idear*——"

Jack looked up as if the lady had announced a novelty.

"I have an *idear* it must be some nobleman; for I heard of Mr. Knowlesdon's lately receiving a letter sealed with a flaming coat of arms.—And now I think of it, this very day Mr. Knowlesdon whispered something to his sister, and though I listened with all my attention——"

"That was civil," said Jack.

The lady continued—"I only heard *cardon*, or some such word."

 "I wonder

* Natives—the uninformed aborigines of a country newly visited by the adepts of taste and ton.—*Vide* Fashionable Vocabulary.

"I wonder whether it is your old acquaintance, lord Cardigan, Martha?" said lady Wronghead.

"Cardigan? the very name!" exclaimed the enraptured spinster; "depend upon it, we are going to have the earl of Cardigan and his sweet family at Thurleston."

Whether the pudding was *feelingly* warm, or Jack had a sudden stitch in his jaws, we know not—certain it is, he gazed on his aunt with open mouth and wonder-stricken aspect. But the lady was unconscious of his glance, and seemed absorbed in some delightful anticipations, for in spite of Miss Clementina's intelligence of innumerable children, Miss Patty well knew that *her* lord Cardigan lacked a wife; and who knows——there is no accounting for the power of youth, beauty, and virgin modesty, on the yielding heart of man.

Jack at last sufficiently recovered the use of his mouth, as very articulately to pronounce—"Lord Cardigan died in London last winter without issue."

Miss

Miss Muddleton, nothing daunted, disdainfully denied the truth of this statement—She was intimate in the family, and it might be so, but she knew to the contrary*.

She however delicately forbore naming the medium of her intimacy, an old aunt, who, some ten years before, had been acquainted with the then housekeeper of lord Cardigan. Jack was also incommunicative on his source of information, though he could have told the company that his chosen friend and shipmate was the nephew of the earl.

The spirit of the conversation was by no means injured by this slight disagreement in the principal speakers. Miss Patty talked with such an air of decision, that her correctness could not be doubted; and by the time the cloth was removed,

* This may sound a *little* paradoxical, but it is an approved mode of modest assertion, uniting polite contradiction to positive affirmation.

every preliminary of visiting was accurately arranged.

At this critical moment, Mr. Solicitor Knowlesdon, the friend and agent of the family of Thurleston, entered the room. Lady Wronghead was preparing a summary account of the news, when her brisker sister prevented the display of her oratory by entering upon the subject herself, and with a look of much meaning at her discomfited nephew, thus commenced her eloquent harangue—"Now, my dear Mr. Knowlesdon, have not you let Thurleston Abbey—to my lord Cardigan—for ninety and nine years? and is he not coming down immediately—with an immense fortune and a purdigious retinue?"

There was a dead pause. At every division of the sentence Mr. Knowlesdon had looked more and more surprised—at its close he was speechless. The awful silence was at length broken by the troublesome young sailor bursting into loud laughter. His aunt gave him a frown, which, had

had he not been brave by more than profession, would have annihilated him; as it was, he bore the brunt well, and was only so far touched by his mother's bridled "John!" as to lean back, where the shadows of the company shaded his face.

Mr. Knowlesdon, naturally taciturn, was recovered to speech neither by the laugh nor by the look. Miss Muddleton, with a smile and a tone that she intended to be inexpressibly winning, again spoke—"My dear sir, am I not perfectly right?"

"You are perfectly and entirely wrong," said the discourteous solicitor.

The silence was dispelled as if by magic—every body was eager to speak—nobody was willing to hear. The tower of Babel would be an apt simile, did we want one; some such rushed into the mind of the wild young sailor, for he darted out of the room, vainly attempting to repress his risibility.

Little was Mr. Knowlesdon aware, that he

he himself had laid the foundation of this marvellous tale—he had observed to lady Wronghead that Thurleston was let, and by the appearance of other guests he had been prevented from communicating further particulars. But what need was there of *facts*, when fancy could so much better garnish the story?—fancy, that creative power, which kindly gave to Miss Muddleton the faculty of coining a name—to Miss Wronghead the magical ability of ushering, in a moment, into the world a numerous progeny—to Adam Wronghead, Esq. the capacity (a thing he much wanted) of computing a long lease—while lady Wronghead, like the fairy in Cinderella, conjured up a splendid equipage at the very moment it was wanted; and sir Gabriel valiantly popt in the immediate possession, as a possible, and therefore probable, and therefore positive, clause to round off the period. This good man seeing one window open, supposed all were so, or

might be so, and could divine no other earthly cause for this phenomenon but the preparation for the expected tenants.

"And did not you say the house was airing, sir Gabriel?" said his fair spouse, in no very soothing accent.

"And did not that blockhead, your son, announce a long lease?" replied the angry baronet, adroitly pointing his anger to the least powerful rather than the most offending, a conduct for which he could adduce the example of all wary politicians, public or private.

"And you fixed upon the name, Patty."

"I had it from Mr. Knowlesdon," answered the spinster with great calmness.

"From me, madam!" iterated the astonished solicitor; "from me! I never heard the name before."

"Oh fie! my dear sir, pray recollect yourself; did you not speak of Cardigan—lord Cardigan, to Mrs. Mary?"

In spite of the sweet smile that accompanied this tender appeal, the invulnerable

able Mr. Knowlesdon insisted on his ignorance.

The lady entered into particulars—"In your little back parlour this morning, just as Mrs. Mary and I were going into the village? you must recollect—I heard the *C* and the *on* so very clearly."

"I remember bidding my sister purchase some remedy for a pain in her chest, and as good expellants of wind, recommended *cardomums*."

A general laugh charmingly vibrated Miss Patty's nerves. The solicitor alone was stupidly composed, and shortly added—"I have let the abbey for a couple of years to a Mr. Egerton."

"Is he married?" exclaimed Miss Wronghead and her maiden aunt at the same instant; and lady Wronghead, bridling in her chair, bade her daughter hold up her head.

What all these ladies were thinking about we cannot possibly divine, nor probably can any of our readers. Hope, however,

ever, in some form, appeared to be alert in their bosoms, and fancy busy with magic pencil—a moment gave years of existence. We have read* of a king, who, during the instantaneous act of plunging his head into a tub of water, passed a long life of imagination. Some such magical influence had given our fair ones, in the space of a few seconds, the events of months—balls, routs, handing into a room, handing out of a room, and all the delicious trepidation of dancing with the handsome young stranger: handsome he must be—could a vulgar figure appertain to the mellifluous name of Egerton? Well might the poet exclaim—"How swift is the glance of the mind!"

The necromancer who, with a few words, had raised these delicious illusions, with just as many syllables dispersed them.—"He brings his lady with him, and comes into the country for retirement."

Instantaneous was the revolution in every

* Spectator, No. 91.

every female bosom. At the words "his lady," Miss Wronghead had very nearly expressed her disappointment, by audibly exclaiming "Pshaw!"

Mortification had a less potent effect on Miss Patty, the solicitor himself being a sort of forlorn hope, to which she turned, after many diverging anticipations; forgetting, therefore, as quickly as possible, the appropriated Mr. Egerton, she turned with one of her sweetest smiles towards the *yet* disengaged bachelor.

"But, brother, you spoke of his *good* family and *large* fortune, I am sure?" observed lady Wronghead, as if eager to demonstrate her accuracy of representation.

"I spoke of his *large* family and *good* fortune," answered the solicitor, with an accent that turned the laugh from Miss Patty to her sister.

The latter, however, meekly sustained this vexation, exulting perhaps in the assurance of uninjured precedence. *Lady* Cardigan must have walked *before* her—

Mrs.

Mrs. Egerton must walk *behind* her—an arrangement of momentous interest to the dignity and felicity of the baronet's wife.

Mr. Knowlesdon had scarcely retired ere fresh discussion took place. Miss Patty, as she sipped her tea, that soothing beverage, which aids the conversational talents of woman in the same degree that the inspiriting grape juice does those of man, thus opened the debate—"So! we are to have a *Mr.* Egerton at Thurleston," (proper accent on Mr.) "and he wishes to live retired, for some *good* reason undoubtedly." The tone in which good was delivered said as plain as it could say, for good read bad. "Nobody hears of a Mrs. Egerton; but a lady indeed, and a parcel of children. Nothing can be plainer—how can Mr. Knowlesdon be so deluded?"

So far good—Miss Patty her sister gave the corollary—"I am sure I shall not visit them."

The chain of reasoning was so admirable

able and so conclusive, that it was unanimously, hospitably, and charitably resolved, that unknown strangers must not be visited. We beg pardon of our readers for the curious tautology of these expressions; but as we pride ourselves on our fidelity of description, we are compelled to say what the ladies said before us—Unknown strangers they were pronounced, and unknown strangers they were likely to remain, under this benevolent verdict.

Spirit of Candour! where hadst thou fled during this demand for thy presence? Why art thou so often absent when most urgently required? Hadst thou but nestled in the corner of one heart—hadst thou thence pleaded, that where all is uncertain, to judge favourably is at least as easy, though perhaps not so *piquante*, as to censure—hadst thou suggested that all charity is not comprized in giving alms, all wisdom in detecting error, some kinder inference had been drawn, some milder judgment

judgment had been decreed—one sentence dropt from gracious lips had changed every link in the logical chain.

Blundering Mr. Knowlesdon was again at the bottom of the mischief. "Mr. Egerton and—his lady—coming for retirement." Had he said wife, the very corner-stone for scandal to build upon had been wanting; for wives are unequivocal animals, but ladies—there are so many sorts of ladies, with rank, and—without rank. Then why seeking retirement? To hide misdemeanour assuredly—there *could* be no other reason; for, let ill-bred philosophers say what they please, "of solitude being the nurse of wisdom and of virtue—that the wise are never so little lonely as when alone," to live retired from choice was the last idea that could find its way into any of the numerous unfurnished apartments of the wise heads now assembled.

CHAP.

CHAPTER V.

Candid Criticism.

A BALMY evening in May ushered the new inhabitants of Thurleston to their dwelling: a light post-chariot and a hackney-chaise conveyed the party. The abbey stood in a richly-wooded park, that was the favourite promenade of the villagers. This evening it so happened that Miss Wronghead and Miss Muddleton were rambling close to the abbey, about the hour Mr. Knowlesdon had named for the arrival of the strangers; but it would be wronging Miss Patty's quick sense of delicacy and propriety to insinuate she came there to have the first peep of Mr. Egerton and his lady.

The moment the chariot stopped, a young man, whom Miss Wronghead instantly

stantly pronounced divinely handsome, sprang out, and having playfully jumped out a laughing boy and a rosy girl, with some care assisted a lady to alight. She had thrown off her hat, and beneath a profusion of auburn hair was seen a very youthful, a very lovely, and a very animated countenance. The chariot passed on, and the chaise drew up; the lady was now the assistant—first fondly kissing a young boy, as she placed him on the lawn, and next taking from a female servant a smiling infant. An ashy paleness overspread her face as she turned towards the large dark pile of building the abbey exhibited—no friend was there to welcome her; she pressed her baby more closely to her bosom, as if its touch had power to repel melancholy, and turning her eye from the cheerless view of her future abode, to the healthy, merry countenance of her crowing child, she entered the house. The gentleman had also disappeared, and as nothing more was to be seen, than the servants

servants removing the luggage, the walking party retired.

Little could be divined from this scene: the lady's being young and handsome was certainly against her, and it was not much in the gentleman's favour that he had taken some care of her.—Husbands, Miss Muddleton observed, with the sagacity of an experienced matron, were not remarkable for acts of care and kindness; but lovers, true lovers, were very different creatures. Yet four children—there was the rub—what right had lovers to children? it was a strange affair—time would shew.

The non-appearance of the strangers at the village church the next Sunday was also against them, though that day following the evening of their arrival might have urged some apology for their negligence. When they did appear, it was curious that the pious Wrongheads, forgetting the holy duty that assembled together the family of one common parent, amused themselves with the unprecedented action of

of investigating the dress, manners, form, face, and looks of the *soi-disant* Mr. and Mrs. Egerton.

Had we not already established a character for accuracy and fidelity, we might incur the risk of being disbelieved, when we assert the unexampled fact, that Miss Wronghead, instead of remembering the text, or the sermon, only remembered that Mr. Egerton had very fine eyes, and Mrs. Egerton a something in the corner of her mouth—a sort of inexplicable smile, that was very suspicious; that lady Wronghead put off her usual nap, to see if she could catch the strangers napping; and that Miss Patty, with unwonted condescension, for the first time in her life, knelt during the prayers, stood during the psalms, and joined in the chanted hymn of gratitude. Jack, indeed, ill-naturedly, and what was worse, audibly, whispered that she did so to touch the heart of the incognito through his ear; but we entreat our readers not to give faith to his wild

conjectures. The new comers behaved with much propriety; the lady, especially, looked as if she came to church—to say her prayers.

A slight summer shower flitted over the heads of the emerging Christians, as they left the church. The handsome stranger was heard to exclaim, in pretty loud tones —" It is raining—where is your carriage," but suddenly his cheek glowed, his eye fell, as, in a lower voice, he added, " Mrs. Egerton ?"

The most cautious judge in Christendom could not have desired stronger evidence that the name did not belong to the lady—some other title was undoubtedly rising to the lips of the speaker; the blush, the hesitation, proved this beyond dispute: had further testimony been wanting, Adam Wronghead, Esq. was ready with it some ten days after, when near the abbey he witnessed his uncle's introduction to the lady. " Helena, my kind friend Mr. Knowlesdon—Mr. Knowlesdon," a flushed brow,

brow, quivering lips, stammering accents, "Mrs. Egerton."

The birth-night ball was not attended by the Thurlestonians, and their absence caused many candid surmises. But, in despite of all that scandal could suggest, or thoughtlessness admit, a sense of propriety triumphed, and it was almost established into a maxim, that retiring delicacy augurs a true feeling, a mental dignity incompatible with obtruding audacity, and that the characters that would be wooed, and not, unsought, force themselves upon public notice, are, nine times out of ten, the only characters worthy respect.

Mrs. Mary Knowlesdon's close attention to her invalid during a fresh attack of indisposition, and the abstraction of the solicitor, had caused this prolonged misconception of the claims of his abbey friends.

The moment Mrs. Mary could quit the sick chamber, she called upon Mrs. Egerton, and invited the Wrongheads to meet the strangers at a handsome dinner.

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This arrangement set every thing to rights. How much may be effected by the active benevolence and steady good sense of an individual!

The party passed off well; Montague Egerton displayed good sense, finished manners, and good temper—and the simple graces, the retiring modesty of his Helena, made their just impression. The keen eyes of Miss Muddleton alone detected an inexplicable something.

A slight blush, and a conscious glance at his wife, passed over the countenance of Montague, as lady Wronghead took precedence into the dining-room; but Mrs. Egerton answered the glance with a smile so full of sweetness and content, that the look rose not to gloom.

Mr. Knowlesdon whispered a few words —Egerton laughed gaily, and took the hand of his amiable hostess.—What could all this mean?

CHAP-

CHAPTER VI.

Calls, Candour, and Conversation.

THE Wrongheads called at the abbey the very next morning, at so early an hour, that lady Wronghead judged it proper to apologize for the unseasonableness of her visit.

Mrs. Egerton was at a loss to divine why any apology was necessary; but she had good reason to guess the cause, when, on returning the visit, she found herself compelled to wait some minutes, ere admission could be procured; and on her entrance into the half-arranged parlour, was informed "lady Wronghead would wait upon her directly."

Sir Gabriel was there already—but Mrs. Egerton had not wit enough to make a mental comment, why the lady should sit

with her husband in a dress unfit to be seen by strangers—why the dearest friend should be treated with less respect than the newest acquaintance. But we shall shortly perceive that, in all things, Mrs. Egerton was utterly destitute of that lively humour that can extract the wrong or the ridiculous from all actions but their own, or how inquisitively and eloquently could her eye have wandered over the scene before her! Beneath a pianoforte, "kept more for ornament than use," a variety of mirth-diffusing articles appeared—distended work-bags, overflowing work-baskets, broken toys, and rumpled papers. The open table had been newly, but imperfectly dusted, and work-boxes and work-baskets of a very different description ornamented its surface. If sir Gabriel had been half as clever as his wife, he would have placed his visitor with her back to the aforesaid pianoforte: as it was, the contrast of elegance and disorder rose before her in all its glory. Some richly-bound books also embellished the

the well-arranged confusion, happily opposed to the dirty paper-covered novels that peeped, with pertinacious obstinacy, from beneath sofa cushions; and the delicate cambric-work, in the gilt, and foiled, and painted *corbeilles**, was set off by the discoloured coarse linen, obstinately standing from the hastily-closed family work-basket.

But lady Wronghead seemed in all things to have reached a high degree of perfection in the art of contrasting. The shrill tones of her voice were clearly heard in angry dispute with her servant, though sir Gabriel, to drown the sound, talked as loudly and as quickly as he could: but he gave himself much unnecessary fatigue, for the lady soon dispersed the recollection of her late angry remonstrance, by the softness of voice and swimming gentleness of manner with which she received her guest. A clean white gown, distinctly marked

 with

* Reader, we know that *corbeilles* are large baskets, and ill express work-baskets—but the term is French.

with every newly unfolded plait, ill concealed a petticoat that had seen cleaner days, and both but half overshaded white hose, less cleanly still.

Mrs. Egerton no doubt felt much gratified by these tokens of marked respect, nor did she once ill-naturedly glance, by word or thought, at what must have been the neatness of a costume in unison with those stockings and that petticoat—But she was a woman of no spirit.

Miss Muddleton and Miss Wronghead dropped in, one after the other, as they could make themselves fit to be seen; and the three ladies, knowing Mrs. Egerton was a stranger to the neighbourhood, as if by unanimous, or as Miss Patty would have said, by "anonymous" consent, proceeded to give her the character of those residing in it.

There was great delicacy and propriety in thus, *as it were**, initiating the unknown into

* We are quite happy in having an opportunity of using this most elegant phrase.

into all the mysteries of the known; and most especially it was kind, by pointing out the defects of every one, to guide Mrs. Egerton whom to seek, and whom to shun —whom to imitate, and whom to decry.

Sir Gabriel, in his attempts to join the conversation, was always in the minority, for he took a very wrong view of the subject, and would detect virtues as well as frailties. — "You will like Mrs. Mary Knowlesdon, I am sure, Mrs. Egerton— she is a very good woman."

We need not give any further instance of the baronet's total deficiency of wit and conversational talent, and neighbourly kindness, and discriminating acumen. Who but himself ever thought of liking a woman because she was good?

We are, however, saved further remonstrance on this subject, by the very candid and learned reply of Miss Patty.—"Why yes, to be sure, Mrs. Mary Knowlesdon may be vastly good," (drawlingly pronoun-

ced) " but* she really is sadly deficient in learning and spirit."

The undaunted baronet next observed—" There is Susan, a mighty pretty maid!"

" Oh, inconceivably pretty!" said Miss Clementina, colouring, as if her papa had used the comparative, and not the positive degree of the adjective; " she is pretty enough, if,* if she was not so monstrously conceited."

" She is worth a score of your fantastic lady Ruthvens," continued the incorrigible sir Gabriel—a bathos comparison, if the expression may be allowed, found a more gracious reception, lady Wronghead only observing—

" Lady Ruthven had some remains of beauty—but* she dressed so ill, and to be sure had been a *leetle* erring."

The reader will better understand the full charity of this speech, when he has heard the history of the countess.

Mrs.

* What could be done by the ladies without these pretty little particles, to check the tide of praise?

Mrs. Egerton was more disposed to chat about things than persons, and took advantage of a short pause in the conversation, to express her admiration of the beautiful scenery around Woodleigh—the open heath, skirted by cottages—the magnificent ocean, the bold rock, the smooth beach—the village church, rising from amidst the clump of oaks and beeches——

Miss Wronghead interrupted her.—"What do you think of our young curate?"

Mrs. Egerton by no means approved of being thus called back from inanimate to animate creation, and simply answered—"He seems a very pleasing young man."

"Such a coxcomb!" continued the young lady; "always fluttering like a butterfly about* Susan Knowlesdon."

"Butterflies always love the vicinity of

 the

* The young lady, by these words, implying not only her disapprobation, but the cause of her disapprobation, reminds us of the elegant lines of Mrs. Grant, who describes a bird as disclosing her nest (that cause of her anxiety) by her plaints.

the fairest flowers," said Mrs. Egerton, with a good-humoured smile, as if willing to return to irrational objects.

But this speech was worse received than even sir Gabriel's, and Miss Wronghead withdrew into herself, to contemplate the pleasing image of Susan Knowlesdon, "that fairest flower."

"But pray, ma'am," interposed Miss Patty, thinking the present an opportunity for displaying her erudition not to be lost, "do not you think the proemial part of his sermon much too long, and the exordium much too short?"

Sir Gabriel had not so entirely forgotten his school knowledge, as to let this learned sentence pass without a hearty laugh, a liberty he often took with the sage remarks of his fair sister.

The lady, fenced in ignorance, calmly bore his incivility as a proof of his deficiency; and the line of the poet, "If ignorance is bliss, 'twere folly to be wise," was perhaps never more forcibly illustrated.

How

How small, how very small a portion of knowledge would have struck to the very root of Miss Patty's complacency, and exterminated it, stem and branch!

Mrs. Egerton retired from this friendly visitation tolerably well-informed of all the faults of all her neighbours; their merits she was left to find out for herself—and in this arrangement the ladies of the Hall proved their just appreciation of the character of their guest. Never, perhaps, did any human being possess more promptitude and acuteness in discovering and unfolding, and publishing the amiable qualities of her associates, than did Helena Egerton.

Mr. Knowlesdon dined that day at the abbey: he inherited much of the same spirit of satire that shone so conspicuously in the family at Random Hall; and in him being combined with strong sense, the dart of criticism keenly reached its mark.

The good Wrongheads, gifted with a very small portion of judgment, and dissipating

pating what little they had on frivolous themes, flung their arrows of censure about them, more abundantly indeed, but less powerfully. It might be said that the feather predominated in the one, and the steel in the other.

Mrs. Egerton's quick apprehension of the ridiculous, her lively perception of decorum and propriety, rendered her perfectly sensible to all the folly displayed at the Hall; but quickly as her taste distinguished the appropriate from the preposterous, and playfully as her fancy could have sketched off every instance of affectation and frivolity, she yielded not to the mischievous propensity; actuated by that most unfashionable of all unfashionable commodities, candour, she was always more ready to extenuate than to exaggerate error, more prompt to discover merit than to detect frailty, and was so lost to all pretensions of wit, as to arrest many a sparkling repartee ere it arose to her lips, simply for fear of being ill-natured, or of giving

giving pain. Happily for society, Mrs. Egerton's conduct has few imitators, and scandal and satire continue to bestow all the delightful vicissitudes of concord and discord to social communion.

It was in vain that the stupid Helena essayed to render the witty solicitor as stupid as herself—to draw him from satire to sense, from* persons to things; the incorrigible bachelor yielded not to her gentle guidance.

"So you have been at Random Hall, and seen the elegant family in all its elegance?" began Mr. Knowlesdon, on the retiring of the servants, for, hardy as he was, he had not arrived at that noble boldness which makes some persons expose the faults of their acquaintance, not only *to* their friends, but *before* their domestics.

"Yes, the house is delightfully situated, and the room into which I was ushered opens

* We earnestly beg forbearance for our frequent repetition of this sentiment—Can it be too often or too urgently inculcated?

opens upon the most delightful flower-garden I ever beheld."

A short dissertation on gardens, flowers, botany—but the unmerciful solicitor returned to the charge.

"But what thought you of the elegantly covered work-table? I can easily imagine its regular confusion—silver-handled scissars here, gold thimbles there, a painted work-box in the middle, garnished with pincushions of velvet, and needle-cases of satin. I have seen it done fifty times, and when time was pressing, have helped to do it myself."

"I saw some books——"

"Ay, true! books—I ought not to have forgotten books, for I was usually ordered to place them in a tumultuous heap, at Miss Patty's elbow, and, if I was not too much hurried, was generally desired to open Cowper's Poems, at 'How sweet, how passing sweet is solitude!' Once, indeed, I made a tremendous mistake, and in my haste, seizing Goldsmith instead of Cowper,

Cowper, placed under Miss Patty's un-dove-like eyes, ' Oh, blest retirement, friend to life's *decline!*' She did not smile upon me for a month."

Montague laughed heartily, nor could Helena suppress a smile; but as the calm surface of the water, ruffled by a playful breeze, soon regains its level, so the gently discomposed serenity of Mrs. Egerton quickly recovered its equability.

After entreating the thanks of our readers for this brilliant, and, if they have not read "Rogers," this novel simile, we will proceed in our narrative.

"There was a new edition of Childe Harold on the table, my love; so your prediction of the popularity of that poem is verified."

Mr. Egerton followed the lead, and some very animated remarks on modern poetry beguiled the succeeding half-hour—"harmonious versification," "rich imagery," "just measure," "truth," "fiction—" an unlucky

unlucky climax—the bachelor was again on the alert.

"Fiction, false representation, *ergo* falsehood: apropos! what fiction did the butler adopt to deny your entrance at your first call at Random Hall?"

"Not at home."

"Yet they were all at home."

"Oh, I knew that very well."

"Then it seems, in the first place, that such fictions are always detected; and in that case, secondly, it must inspire most gratifying notions of the hospitality of the visited."

"'Not at home,' is a mere form of words, intending no deception, and authorized by long custom," replied Helena; but the solicitor continued his strictures.

"To go on with my logic, *secundum artem*, I deny that custom can ever give authority to error; and, secondly, I contend that deception is intended, for if people would be content to be seen and known

known for what they are, they might be seen at all times, and under all circumstances. It is the desire *of appearing what we are not*—of seeming more wise, more wealthy, more refined than we have any just pretensions to be, that leads to all such subterfuges."

"I shall certainly deny myself the very next time you call at the abbey," said Mrs. Egerton, laughing.

"True woman—obstinate even in convicted error!" exclaimed Mr. Egerton, in a most husband-like manner. "Let me run away before you begin your criticisms on Mrs. Egerton."

"Mrs. Egerton cannot disclose an action but she displays a virtue," said the gallant solicitor.

CHAP-

CHAPTER VII.

Great Dinners, and Odd Dinners.*

A CABINET council, or, more properly speaking, a diet was convened at Random Hall, to take into consideration the important business of inviting the strangers. This was carried without *an assenting* voice, as Miss Patty elegantly expressed it, for every body had reasons to wish for the party: lady Wronghead had her new tea equipage to exhibit—Miss Wronghead her accomplishments — Miss Muddleton her learning — Adam Wronghead, Esq. panted to shew himself *alla bellissima incognita*, not without some honourable hopes of making a diversion in his favour in

* Odd—extraordinary, uncommon, strange, &c. *Vide* Sheridan. We cannot give equal authority for the Italian of the heir.

in her plighted heart—sir Gabriel, simple man! desired to shew nothing but his hospitality.

The next question was, on what day to give the gala? Every day seemed to have an occupation, but that blank day, Sunday.—"Then let them come on Sunday," said the baronet.

"La! papa, how vulgar!" exclaimed Miss Clementina.

"Vulgar, child! is not Sunday a day for friendly and benevolent communion with our fellow-creatures?"

Friendly and benevolent! what strange mistakes some people make! The party had nothing to do with friendship and benevolence, as the ladies very well knew.

Miss Clementina took the pen—"I will say Saturday."

"No, Clemy, my dear, don't say Saturday!" exclaimed her alarmed mother; "we are always in such a bustle on Saturdays."

"We are always in a bustle on all days, I think," murmured sir Gabriel.

There

There were some speeches which this good man gave in under tones, and this was one of them—why and wherefore, let clever notable wives explain.

"Then Monday," said the conceding Clementina.

"No, Clemy, my dear, don't say Monday—it is so very inconvenient, coming just after Sunday."

Miss Clementina rose from the writing-desk, and dutifully announced her intention of not writing at all.

Miss Muddleton now interfered, *purtesting* she never saw such disrespectful behaviour, and would write herself. As great calamities are said to unite the opposing parties of states, so now did this menace of Miss Patty's instantly reduce the refractory members of the diet; for every one felt the risk of disgrace incurred, by allowing the elegant penmanship, and yet more elegant spelling, of Miss Muddleton to appear.

Miss Wronghead therefore reseated herself,

self, and after much further discussion, it was resolved that the following note, written on hot-pressed paper, with gilt edges and embossed border, should be sent:—

"*Random-Hall.*

"Sir Gabriel and lady Wronghead —at home—dinner—six o'clock—August twenty-third—

"*Mr. and Mrs. Egerton.*"

(Sealed with the family seal—Crest, a head reversed; motto, *Toujours tort.*)

Sir Gabriel read and re-read the note, then said—"These Egertons will be devilish clever if they can find out what you mean, Clemy; for hang me if I can."

"Very likely, sir," replied the young lady, with a most respectful sneer.

"But why leave out half the words, Clemy, my dear?" said her mother.

"Oh,

"Oh, that is quite *comme il faut*," said young Hopeful; "it argues fashionable hurry."

"And this day six weeks! We may be dead by that time," growled the baronet.

"And why 'at home,' child? are we not sure to be at home when we invite our friends?" observed lady Wronghead.

"Nay, my dear, but such facts ought to be noted in the fashionable world, because of their novelty," observed her husband, rather sarcastically.

"And six o'clock, Clemy! just our tea-time," continued the lady.

"I remember, when I was abroad," said Adam Wronghead, Esq. yawning, and stretching himself, "I generally contrived to dine at sunset."

"And you may *continue* to do so at home, any Christmas-day you please," replied his father.

The third doughty question was, who were to meet the Egertons?

This seemed a point not easily decided. Every

Every one desired some particular favourite; and the moment the choice became a matter of dispute, of course no one chose to give up his or her opinion: Miss Patty talked, lady Wronghead disputed, Miss Wronghead exclaimed, Timotheus argued, sir Gabriel reasoned; but as parallel lines may flow on for ever without meeting, so as each of the diet pertinaciously persisted in the sentiment originally adopted, there was no probability of the matter being amicably adjusted. Lady Wronghead, however, cut the discussion short, by next day sending out her cards to whom she pleased.

Miss Patty formed a plan for bringing about an accidental explication of her being the author of "The Innocent Criminal," and Miss Wronghead provided a new gown, new shoes, and new stockings (the only articles of apparel needed in the costume of modern belles), for the eventful day.

It arrived. The Egertons proved themselves

selves people of no consequence, by being punctual to the hour, and people of no spirit, in not keeping the circle waiting for them, and in not spoiling the dinner that had been hospitably prepared for them. The table was profusely and elegantly laid out; and as it could accommodate twenty as well as ten, twenty were invited.

Only one incident of very great importance occurred—the *white fricassee* stood opposed to the *brown fricandeau!* Nothing could be worse—lady Wronghead blessed herself as the most unfortunate of women: and who, that saw her surrounded by friends and family, revelling in all that health, wealth, and rank could bestow, who would not have admitted the justice of her complaints? Tremendous, however, as was this disaster, no eye but that of the ill-fated hostess seemed to mark its fatal occurrence — the guests were neither so witty as to laugh, nor so feeling as to mourn; sir Gabriel alone understood the half-suppressed agony of his susceptible helpmate

helpmate, so that *his* dinner was the only one she had the satisfaction of spoiling by her exquisite delicacy.

As about a dozen of the softer sex retired into the drawing-room, our manly readers will, no doubt, suggest the possibility of much discourse taking place. But as it is utterly impossible to repeat all the good and wise, and genteel and polite speeches that were made, we will content ourselves with giving the heads of the discourse, as the loud tones predominated from the several knots into which the party had divided.

Beaux, balls, barouches, bands *à la Grecque*, and belts *à la Turque*, issued from the corner embellished by the young ladies—cradles, cots, compassion, and caudle, murmured from the station occupied by the matrons — whilst those, neither the one nor the other, neither young nor married, uttered various tones on various themes; Miss Patty had brought about the projected eclaircissement, and was giv-

ing a minute account of her publication to the stranger guest, whilst Mrs. Mary Knowlesdon, gifted with no literary talents, had nothing better to converse about than the distresses of a poor cottager, in whose behalf she sought to engage the charity of a wealthy spinster.

Lady Wronghead was closing her discourse as she had begun it, with her misfortunes and her feelings, the *fricassee* and the *fricandeau*, when the words caught Miss Patty's ear. Though the gentlemen were now dropping in, and the servants were arranging the candles and card-tables, this fair damsel could not resist displaying her sense, in opposition, or as she scientifically phrased it, in *ap*position* to her sister's sensibility—"Really, lady Wronghead, I am surprised at your attention to such trifles—to such *little* minutias; it is quite unworthy a person of any understanding—John, those candles stand awry—Now,

* The reader may perhaps deem this term the apter of the two.

Now, what does it signify where the *frigasy* stood?—not straight yet, John—or whether the *frigandy* was here or there?—a few inches further, John—it was eatable, wherever it was—stupid fellow! I'll place them myself."

Mr. Knowlesdon laughed aloud; Mr. Egerton passed his hand over his face, to hide the rising smile; the mote and the beam popped into the head of the young curate, and he made a *mem.* in some part of it, to choose that verse for his next Sunday's text; Mrs. Egerton assisted Miss Patty.

The dinner was of course to be returned, or in technical terms, the Egertons now owed* a dinner to the Wrongheads, and being honest people, thought the sooner they were out of debt the better. It was settled in about two minutes, and cards issued accordingly.

About a dozen guests assembled at four

 o'clock

* No term can be more appropriate, such debts being sometimes paid with as much reluctance as a taylor's bill.

o'clock in the abbey dining-room. The dinner had nothing to distinguish it, either from its scantiness or its profusion, its clumsiness or its elegance. But, oh awful chasm! there was no fish! there was no game! Lady Wronghead gave a polite side glance at her spouse, and actually started when nothing better than a turkey headed the second course. Two sleepless nights had she passed in the fear of losing the indispensable partridges; three quarrels—we beg pardon—three differing arguments had she sustained with her lord and master on the momentous theme, and not till after many a contrivance, and many an intrigue, had she triumphed over the probity of a small farmer to break the laws of his country, and procure for her the necessary removes—three partridges at the top, and a hare at the bottom—What apology could Mrs. Egerton offer?

The stupid Helena never dreamed of offering any; she was thinking of her guests, not of her dinner—she was planning

ning for their comfort, not for her own display; and was so absorbed in these whimsical feelings, that she did not once scold, though the bread-sauce appeared two seconds too late, nor blush though the turkey was ungarnished with lemon. Perhaps she might think, scolding her footman would not increase the appetite of her company—perhaps she might think her frowns would not conduce to their comforts—perhaps she might think the crime was not very heinous—But there is no fathoming the thoughts of so odd a personage!

Mr. Egerton, from unknown motives, indisposed for society, and meeting it with irritated petulance, was insensibly beguiled of his spleen, and soon reflected the good-humour that beamed from the head of his table. The guests imperceptibly caught the gaiety of their hostess, for cheerfulness and sadness are infectious; all seemed pleased, they scarcely knew how—all were good-humoured, they scarcely knew where-

fore. As the sun draws forth the peculiar tints and peculiar fragrance of every flower, so did Mrs. Egerton draw forth the peculiar talents, the peculiar good qualities of every visitant.—We are not often fortunate in the novelty of our similes, but we really think this one is as new as it is beautiful.

Lady Wronghead had long nourished (the word is in place, however strangely it may sound) an implacable enmity to one of the present party, a Mrs. Mansel, the giddy young wife of an officer of dragoons. The whole animosity arose from that wonted source of social division, misconception and misrepresentation. Mrs. Mansel had said something, or done something, or looked something, that was pronounced inimical to lady Wronghead; and a mutual *friend* represented the affair to her ladyship, with just so many alterations and additions as to make it worth representation, and exalt the zeal of the representer. Lady Wronghead of course resented the affront,

affront, by treating Mrs. Mansel with dignified coldness.

It was now Mrs. Mansel's turn to be offended; unconscious of her crime, she did not choose to submit to its punishment. Had either lady asked the other—Pray, ma'am, why this change? the mystery would have been cleared, and union restored. But as such questions are deemed derogatory to the consequence of the questioner, and as the romance of life, as well as of novels, is preserved by their not being asked, the truth remained for some time concealed. By degrees both ladies began to suspect a mistake, for as passion faded, reason revived; but unhappily there was not to be found the same promptitude to produce reconciliation as there had been to effect dissension.

Now Mrs. Egerton had a natural antipathy to every form of enmity; she talked of its being unfeeling, unchristian, and very puritanically began to soften this, from the moment she heard of its existence.

"What business was it of hers?" as Miss Patty very properly asked—a question Mrs. Egerton might pretend to answer, by saying, that as a human being, she had a right to sympathize with human beings—to soften their sorrows, and increase their joys. But whatever were her rights, she certainly did presume to interfere in the present instance, and, though by an almost invisible agency, did actually succeed in restoring Mrs. Mansel to the good opinion of lady Wronghead.

And what had she done to bring about this desired reconciliation? What plots had she laid—what schemes pursued—what coadjutors engaged? Of all this she had done nothing; a few soothing expressions—a few explanatory words—much active kindness—much generous candour, was the sum of her interference. How often is disunion prolonged from the want of such mediation! How often do two hearts vainly pant for reconciliation, merely because no common friend is at hand to interpret

interpret and convey the feelings of each to the other!

The company retired at a late hour, well pleased with their visit. There had been no attempt at competition—no endeavour to surpass others. Miss Wronghead was not outvied in dress, nor her mother in the delicates of her table, nor Miss Muddleton in hard words and erudition. Each individual had been placed in the most amiable point of view; each had been drawn into the situation and conversation in which each could excel. Helena thought of every body—exalted every body but herself.

When the Thurlestonians found themselves alone, they did not, as they ought to have done, and as every one but themselves would have done, draw their chairs together, and liberally scan every word, look, and gesture, of those so recently the objects of their polite hospitality.

"You gave us a better dinner than I expected, Helena," was the only retrospective speech hazarded by the gentleman.

"I am glad *you* thought so, my love," the only gratulatory remark expressed by the lady.

That the pair we are now describing are the most outrageously unfashionable—that they are utterly unworthy of imitation, and that we merely describe them as a *lusus naturæ*, a sport of nature, as a beacon that must be shunned, we are very ready to acknowledge; and the only further remark we have to hazard is, that such of our fair readers only who prefer the insipidity of domestic tranquillity must study to copy the lady: to all lovers of dash, spirit, and notoriety, she is a mere black letter, perfectly unintelligible, and as perfectly inimitable.

CHAP-

CHAPTER VIII.

A New Character.

THE estate adjoining to Thurleston was Castle Ruthven. Lord Ruthven had very lately introduced his lady to the respectable demesne of his ancestors, and by some unaccountable paradox, produced as his bride the mother of a numerous family.

Lady Ruthven had every claim to public attention, for she was reputed rich, titled, arrogant—only one slight blemish tarnished her pretensions to respect (if that can be called a blemish, which the world of fashion and of taste so charitably overlook.) Let not our readers fancy that this preamble is to prepare them for any really heinous crime, such as low birth, original poverty, pristine rusticity—no, we have nothing worse to say of the lady, than that she

she one day, a little unkindly, left a fond confiding husband, and three helpless children, just beginning to demand the instructions of a mother. There was little remarkable in this; the only extraordinary part of the story was, the strange effect this trifling incident produced.

Mrs. Mordaunt, the wife of a country clergyman, protecting and protected, found a scanty income sufficient to procure happiness, and a humble rank adequate to ensure respect; she felt she had a place in society, and sustained it. Lady Ruthven, the consort of a powerful and *honourable* nobleman, shunning and shunned, discovered that a princely revenue was inefficient to purchase tranquillity, and an illustrious title incompetent to procure consideration; she saw she had no place in society, and vainly sought to possess one; the impertinence she would once have dared to resent she now was humbled to endure—the vulgar, whom once she spurned, she now conciliated—the menials, whom she

she once would have commanded, she now condescended to flatter; in every eye she dreaded to read contempt—in every movement feared to encounter scorn; and the woman who was dignified amidst poverty and obscurity, felt herself despicable amidst rank and splendour.

Whence could this metamorphosis arise? Must we be compelled to admit the justness of the sentiments of uncourteous moralists—that the loss of innocence produced the loss of dignity, and that Mrs. Mordaunt retrograded from happiness when she retrograded from virtue, and flying from duty, fled also from tranquillity?

The splendid mansion, now for the first time accessible to every class of visitants, the affability with which, for good reasons, all were received, greatly attracted notice. Lady Wronghead, by no very uncommon mistake of reasoning, conceiving herself vulnerable to pity, when she was only instigated by prudence, led the way, and of course the whole neighbourhood followed her

her lead, her title rendering her decisions infallible — Momentous responsibility of greatness!

We are wrong in saying the whole neighbourhood—there was one sturdy oppositionist: no argument could convince the obdurate Mrs. Egerton that lady Ruthven was an object either of pity or of consideration. Miss Patty had employed her best logic on the subject: first, the lady's being a countess, rich, fashionable; next, she ought to call, because every body called; thirdly and lastly, she would lose all the gay *fêtes* at the castle.

Mrs. Mansel, as the first fruits of her restored union with lady Wronghead, gave a sociable little party to the Random Hall circle, and invited the Knowlesdons and Egertons to join the festive band.

A little chat took place before the arrangement of the card-tables. Sancho Panza blessed the memory of the man who invented sleep—but what renown is due to the contriver of cards, those moral toys,

toys, that not only disperse the great foes to human happiness, ennui and indolence, but also arrest human error, by checking the exuberance of satire, and silencing the babblings of scandal? Well do they deserve influence and merit homage! an influence, an homage so profound, as to lead the uninitiated Asiatic to suppose that they were the gods of the Christians.

The ladies and gentlemen, as usual, occupied opposite sides of the room. This custom is, we believe, of such high antiquity, that it would be in vain now to trace its origin; but that it is not wholly owing to the distinct range of ability in either sex may be inferred from the circumstance of both sexes drawing their materials of conversation often from the same source—beaux talking of their dress, viz. boots, buttons, brooches, and Brutus* heads, with as much

* To prevent posterity, to whom doubtless this admirable work will descend, making any mistake in the etymology of this term, we beg to say, that our observation and experience

much vivacity as belles of their attire, viz. rouge,* ribbons, rings, and ridicules.

The weather had been ably discussed before the division of the house, as it has been found, from time immemorial, that ladies can complain of the imperfections of nature, and adjust her operations with full as much propriety as the gentlemen, and can at least with equal energy condemn the ordinations of Him who sitteth in the highest heaven.

A pause of discourse on the female side (an

experience confirm the explanation given by our Latin dictionary.—"Brutus—void of reason." The propriety of this designation may be perceived and proved by putting a Brutus wig on the head of a beau. A. D. 1800.

* The list of modern female attire is certainly rather brief. That rouge is an article of wearing apparel cannot be doubted, when we remember that it is *put on* and *put off* at pleasure. Ridicule, in modish phraseology, means a bag, something like the things called work-bags by our grandmothers; its use, if it has any, is however essentially different; its name, a delicate satire on Gothic times, and on the mean occupations of our *un*accomplished progenitors.

an event of certainly somewhat rare occurrence) was briefly interrupted by the hostess, who luckily remembered that her company had not yet talked over the new comer, an oversight she hastened to remedy.—" What do you think of lady Ruthven, Mrs. Egerton?"

" I have not seen her."

" Bless me! have you not called?"

" No."

" But you will call?"

" Indeed I shall not."

There was something so very different in Mrs. Egerton's delivery of these words, from her usual gentle tones, that Mrs. Mansel was astonished; yet the little speech was neither loudly nor shrilly sounded, though the calm and tempered energy with which it was pronounced spoke a decision not to be shaken. The Wrongheads looked somewhat confounded, for the motives which they knew led to this determination, the violated vows of the divorcee,

vorcee, rose like an accusation on their more ductile morality.

It was really provoking that the Wrongheads allowed themselves to be thus abashed, by an untitled, unequipaged, unsupported individual—it is quite vexatious that no initiation in fashion, no assumption of audacity, can rescue its votaries from being awed by virtue, and subdued by good sense.

Mrs. Egerton had a glorious opportunity of improving her triumph, and yet further confounding the abashed circle; but there was something in her nature that revolted from depressing the depressed, or aggrandizing herself by the humiliation of others; shunning, therefore, rather than courting, the exposition of her superiority, she dropped the subject, and turned to topics more congenial to friendly and benevolent communion.

Mrs. Mansel, restrained by no such delicacy, and proud that she was the only other individual that had not noticed the countess,

tess, though her omission was accidental, exclaimed—"Nor have I called, nor shall I."

"And pray, ma'am, why should you not call?" asked the easily irritated lady Wronghead.

Mrs. Egerton declined giving her reasons from delicacy—Mrs. Mansel from necessity; she had no reason to give, and having spoken without consideration, accounted for it without judgment—"Because she looks so proud and ill-natured."

"My dear Mrs. Mansel, we must not judge of people by their looks: lady Ruthven is generally thought obliging and good-humoured," said Mrs. Egerton.

"Are you her advocate?" inquired the startled Mrs. Mansel.

"Why not? though faulty, she may have some good qualities."

"Then why don't you visit her?"

Mrs. Egerton coloured, and glanced her eye on the circle.

"You see you must explain yourself," said Mrs. Knowlesdon.

"I dare

"I dare say we all think alike of lady Ruthven's conduct as a wife and a mother," replied Mrs. Egerton, timidly.

"Certainly! Certainly!" exclaimed many voices, as if all were eager, by this censure, to acquit themselves of their share of reprobating her ladyship.

"But when she repents," added lady Wronghead.

"Then, and then only, should every hand be held out to her," said Mrs. Egerton.

"She has not many signs of repentance at present," observed Mrs. Mary with a pitying sigh.

Miss Patty Muddleton fidgetted in her chair, as if some brilliant thought had just illuminated her.—"Pray, Mrs. Egerton, I beg your pardon, but was not your dairy-maid an unfortunate——I beg your pardon, I do not mean to offend; but it seems so odd you cannot visit lady Ruthven, yet shelter that girl."

"You do not offend me at all," replied Mrs. Egerton, with perhaps a little more truth

truth than Miss Patty had averred she did not mean to do so: "your question is a very natural one, as probably you do not know the circumstances under which I received Fanny Dale."

Miss Patty knew them well, but glad of the offered excuse, purtested she knew nothing of the affair.

The high respect we profess* for Miss Patty urges us to suppose, that she was not aware that she was speaking a falsehood—saying what was not true. But as we aim at uniting instruction and amusement (a union, by the way, never attempted before), we are compelled to avow that Miss Patty intended a deception, *ergo* a lie†; and

* We like the term *profess* in this place much better than *feel*; though, to be sure, *to profess* and *to feel* are deemed synonimous, and probably do amount to the same.

† We grant this is a very rude and a very ungenteel word; but we really think, if things were always called by their right names, the catalogue of error would be curtailed; people would avoid bad acts to avoid bad terms; for this is an age that stumbles over hillocks, but jumps over mountains.

and though the words were spoken in a low tone, and with a pretty soft air, yet to all intents and purposes they implied as complete a falsehood as ever any school-boy or school-girl was chastised for.

Mrs. Egerton in a low voice began her story.—"Fanny Dale is the daughter of one of Mr. Egerton's labourers. Her betrayer, after solemnly promising marriage, deserted her on the birth of her child. I found her in her father's cottage, sinking beneath shame and remorse."

"And you rescued her from further guilt?"

"It seemed to me a duty to give a fellow-creature the chance of returning to the path of rectitude; without it she might have plunged into deeper criminality."

"Oh! were penitence half as much countenanced as guilt, how many erring souls might be reclaimed to virtue!" Mrs. Mary spoke with earnestness.

Mrs. Egerton continued—"The unhappy girl unfeignedly mourns her error; but lets

lets its commission find some extenuation in the deception used to destroy her: she broke no vows, she wrung no heart so deeply as her own, and by its trusting love she fell."

"How different this picture from the image of the wife, the mother, tearing asunder the most precious ties of life, violating the most sacred engagements!—in a moment of unfeeling levity, lacerating the heart of a trusting husband—blasting the fame of an innocent progeny—quitting the duties of maternal affection, at the very period they were most vital to the interests of opening childhood—flying from the claims of connubial love, when increase of years and infirmity rendered those claims essential to the very existence of her husband! My dear Mrs. Egerton, I feebly express what you would have eloquently detailed."

The energy of Mrs. Knowlesdon's voice and manner gave force to her address—the circle listened with uncontrollable emotion;

for when shall the voice of truth lose its power over the human soul?

CHAPTER IX.

A New Method of treating an Enemy.

THE effect of the conversation recorded in our last chapter did not pass away with the breath that gave it utterance. A veil seemed withdrawn from the eyes of every hearer, and a stronger light fell on the hitherto shadowed frailties of the countess—a juster sense of her conduct supervened; contempt took place of respect, and a diminution of deference gradually pervaded the manners of the society.

Lady Ruthven, keenly alive to every sign of disrespect and every defalcation of consequence, marked the change. Though at first irritated and indignant, her conscience compelled her to admit its justice, and

and to more closely scrutinize the conduct that had incurred it. This review could not be unbeneficial; it humbled her to herself. Humiliation is a serviceable precursor of self-reproach—reproach the first stage to repentance—repentance the prelude to amendment. All this train of reforming emotion was put into action by the good sense and right feeling of an individual—that individual a decried stranger, without the influence of fortune, fashion, or rank, without even the influence of family connexions. So fine sometimes is the agency that guides the opinions of the mass of mankind! so great sometimes are the effects produced by humble causes! What then might not be expected from the ascendancy of higher powers, on the morals, and the manners, and the happiness of society?

Lady Ruthven, respecting the virtue she would* not imitate, had sought by many

* Yes, we must say *would*, and not *could*. How much more frequently are we defective in *will* than in *power!*

an artifice to become acquainted with Mrs. Egerton. Among other ingenious contrivances, she addressed a note to her, on the pretext of inquiring the character of a servant lately dismissed from the abbey, and took advantage of a courteous answer to bow to Mrs. Egerton, and thank her for her politeness, the first time they met. Mrs. Egerton met the movement as a gentlewoman (we had almost said as a Christian), but withdrew into her former reserve.

Now there is nothing more fierce than a discomfited woman, especially when foiled in cunning; a bearess robbed of its young is tame in the comparison. Lady Ruthven was enraged beyond all dominion of reason; and as such rage confounds right and wrong, and in the prosecution of revenge is willing to incur selfish evil, so lady Ruthven, in the paroxysm of anger, hired the worthless domestic, and risked her own comfort, to demonstrate her contempt of her neighbour.

This

This little incident was soon promulgated, with every addition and alteration necessary to render it amusive and extraordinary. The tide, as we have seen, being now as much against the countess as it had before been in her favour, these additions and alterations were of course governed by the change, and nowise advantageous to her character.

Miss Patty Muddleton had just given the story in its latest edition, with every improvement and insertion it had received in every former publication, and it was just ascertained as an almost positive fact, that lady Ruthven had laid down a regular plan to bribe all the servants from all their places, when Mrs. Egerton joined Mrs. Mary Knowlesdon's sociable tea-party. Mrs. Mary did not fail, with becoming gravity of countenance, to commiserate Mrs. Egerton for the vexations she had endured.

Mrs. Egerton, much surprised, declared she had no vexations to endure.

"Not with a moderate income?" thought Miss Patty.

"Not with four children?" thought lady Wronghead.

"Not with a husband?" thought Mrs. Mansel.

It may hence be supposed that these ladies had either husband, children, or fortune, to embitter their lives. We see what mistakes may be made by superficial observers, since these are possessions generally deemed productive of felicity. Around Mrs. Knowlesdon's cheerful tea-table were assembled a well-dressed mirthful groupe. Each member had issued from a comfortable home, where affluence and affection contributed to supply every want, and gratify every wish. Who would suppose they were not happy? If we could but for a few moments possess the storied mirror, that would reveal the secret thoughts of the soul, how soon we could convince our readers that every bosom had its hidden care; that beneath the stiff kerchief

chief of lady Wronghead the thought of home pressed heavily; that under the rich lace sham* of Miss Patty, which doubled every charm it *ought* to hide, preyed gnawing hopes, and half-confirmed despair; that below—no, it was all above that concealed—no, it was all exposed—nor tucker, lace, nor crape, veiled the soft throbbings of Miss Wronghead's breast, yet envy reared its sceptre there, and there vanity found a home.

Mrs. Mary partially illuminated Mrs. Egerton's dark mind, and shewed her why she ought to be unhappy, though she could not persuade her to be so.

"Yet after all it is a matter of very little consequence," said lady Wronghead.

"Pardon me," said Mrs. Egerton; "nothing can be inconsequential that maligns the character of a fellow-creature."

"Then lady Ruthven has not been so

* Even so, reader, the dictionary tells you very true—the *sham* is a counterfeit, for it affects to cover what it does not veil—causing exposition rather than concealment.

very wicked?" said Mrs. Mary, with an arch smile.

Mrs. Egerton explained, and with some warmth exculpated lady Ruthven from the charge of having bribed her servant.—"The girl had very licentious habits," she continued; "I told her ladyship so; for I consider it as imperative a duty to punish vice as to foster merit."

"Or to cherish penitence," observed Mrs. Knowlesdon.

Mrs. Egerton smiled and proceeded—"Lady Ruthven engaged the girl at her own peril, and cannot be considered to have injured me; towards myself her conduct has been perfectly correct."

In all Miss Muddleton's readings and writings, wide and multifarious as they were, she had never encountered a more novel idea—it was really a valuable discovery in the arcana of the human mind. "Advocation of an enemy—How strange!" thought the erudite spinster, and so doubtless will think our readers, learned and unlearned.

learned.—We have taken pains to give this incident with more than our accustomed accuracy, because we were aware that we were making excessive demands on the faith of the public.

Mrs. Mansel listened with profound attention, as collecting materials for future conduct. Little was Mrs. Egerton conscious of the impression her words were fated to give—they fixed on the mind of an artless young woman principles of candour and rectitude, that were developed in the actions of her future life. Hence it may be inferred, that had illiberal and censorious sentiments been expressed, the effect on the yielding mind of the youthful listener would have been as mischievous as it was now beneficial. Much as we dislike to moralize, we cannot resist illustrating this position with a metaphor—likening good maxims to stars that sparkle in the firmament, not only beauteous themselves, but beaming many a pure ray into surrounding darkness; bad sentiments to

clouds that gloom the heavens, not only unlovely in themselves, but diffusing shade and darkness over surrounding objects.

The party dispersed to cards. Mrs. Egerton gaily took her place at one of the tables, and acquitted herself much to the satisfaction of her partner; not that she played the game with scientific skill, for Miss Patty detected innumerable mistakes, which, for the good of the company, she exposed at the beginning, the middle, and the end of every deal. But Mrs. Egerton so patiently admitted her blunders, entered with such vivacity into the interest of the game, apologized so politely for her deficiencies, and so invariably omitted to detect and expose the faults of her coadjutor, that her heinous crimes were forgiven her, and she was allowed to lead up to the strong hand, and trump her partner's best club, with only a reproving smile from that partner, Mrs. Mary Knowlesdon, and an ominous casting up of the eyes of Miss Patty.

Miss

Miss Wronghead marked with some surprise, that Mrs. Egerton neither yawned, to shew the irksomeness of such an avocation to one of her superior mind, nor threw down her cards, with that charming air of indifference, so often prettily covering intense interest in the game; that she did not once start, as from a learned reverie, with the *polite* exclamation, "I beg your pardon, but I was thinking of something else!" No intelligent glance of her eye entreated the pity of some distant intimate—no magnanimous declarations of indifference whether she won or lost, to prove her generous disdain of money—no trick to procure respect, no artifice to feign refinement.

As, however, she frankly avowed her preference of any other mode of employment, she seized the first opportunity of resigning her place; and when she could choose her occupation *without infringing on the pleasures of others,* she did not hesitate to retire from the card-table. Sir Gabriel had

had just arrived, nothing loth to take her seat.

Miss Wronghead, having politely announced her hatred of cards and card-parties, had a little before sallied forth to enjoy a rural walk in the principal street of the village—not to see, but to be seen; for there captain Mansel's troop, officers and all, paraded.

Mrs. Egerton now consented to a proposal of Susan's, and followed her into an adjoining apartment to inspect a collection of dried flowers; they found Mr. Knowlesdon writing, but he instantly quitted his desk, perchance thinking the conversation of a fellow-creature worthy all his own profound cogitations; and indeed we have been desired to say, cold must be the heart, and dull the head, that would not promptly, cheerfully, and thankfully, exchange the selfish book, or lonely pen, for the social communication of ideas and feelings, and think reading and writing well resigned for conversation.

The

The trio admired the contents of the herbarium.—"How much better is this than cards!" said Susan, with a self-approving air.

"Why better? these flowers innocently beguile our time, as cards do that of our friends," replied Mrs. Egerton.

"Oh, but there is always so much scandal at the card-table."

"That is not the fault of the table, or of the cards; we could be as censorious as possible over our herbarium."

Susan laughed.

"It is not the occupation, but our manner of abusing or using the opportunities it offers, that is reprehensible."

"Correct, perfectly correct," said Mr. Knowlesdon.

"But some persons are so ill-natured at cards," said Susan.

"Such persons would probably be ill-natured anywhere and everywhere."

"But cards try the patience."

"Ha!

"Ha! then they give occasion for displaying patience," observed the solicitor.

"It matters little, Miss Knowlesdon," said Mrs. Egerton, "what occupies the hands (provided it is innocent), if the temper is rightly disposed—cutting paper, writing charades, playing cards, or examining dried flowers."

Mr. Knowlesdon's lips moved as if he was about to suggest some distinctions; but a smile from Mrs. Egerton explained her motives, and, like lady Townly in the play, he gulped down the rising speech, and substituted another in its place—"Yes, Susan, suppose we had followed up your satiric remark respecting card-playing, and harshly criticised the circle in the next room, would the mere act of handling these flowers have exonerated us from the charge of being scandalmongers?"

"Or had you scowled at my remonstrance, instead of displaying such perfect good-humour," said Mrs. Egerton, "I fancy you

you could have exhibited as many pretty sullen airs as any disappointed gamester in the world."

Susan was unspeakably gratified.*

"Ay, ay, child," said the solicitor; "let us each be as happy as we can, in our own way, and neither censure others for a dissimilarity of tastes and pursuits, nor incommode them with our own. There are a thousand different modes of being happy in this world."

CHAPTER X.

Short and Sweet.

"AFTER all, this Mrs. Egerton is a mighty poor creature," said Miss Patty Muddleton;

* Sweet is the breath of praise, when given by those
Whose own high merit claims the praise they give.
MRS. H. MOORE.

ton; "one never hears of her, and scarcely ever sees her."

"That may be owing to the claims of her young family, her domestic duties, the taste of her husband," said Mr. Solicitor Knowlesdon, adding sarcastically—"these are homely reasons, I grant, for a woman not appearing in public, but I fear Mrs. Egerton has no better to offer."

"Oh! but her pursuits are so low and vulgar," said Miss Clementina; "only think of the curate catching her at the bedside of a beggarly cottager."

"Yes, actually holding broth to the dirty wretch," added Miss Patty.

"Shocking!" said Mr. Knowlesdon.

"Why cannot she be contented with making a handsome subscription?" said Miss Wronghead.

"Perhaps for the whimsical motive of doing more good by personal attendance," replied the solicitor.

"Women of spirit always come forward on

on all public occasions," said Miss Patty, longing to add—*as I do.*

"And women of virtue always shun every chance of notoriety," replied the solicitor with emphasis, which made Miss Patty rejoice that the aforesaid *as I do* had been unpronounced.

"Woman's safest station is retreat," repeated Mrs. Mary.

"But there is such a thing as a genteel retreat," observed Miss Clementina; "Mrs. Egerton has such mean notions, humouring that impetuous handsome husband of hers, teaching her children their letters, and I dare say, seeing the dear little souls to bed every night, and to breakfast every morning." She laughed as she concluded this very witty speech.

Her uncle's intelligent eyes turned upon her in all their sarcastic expression.—"It is to such women that the state is indebted for its virtue, and perhaps its tranquillity," said he, forcibly; "for such women not only rear virtuous members of society, but

but by their example, their precept, their active benevolence, ameliorate the characters and the fate of the lower classes, lessen the evils of poverty, and enlighten the darkness of ignorance."

Few of the family were hardy enough to oppose the solicitor in argument, and just now he looked so terribly stern, that even Miss Patty dropped her eye and her argument together.

But the solicitor's ire was to be yet further roused. Susan Knowlesdon had for many days kept much in her chamber, was *distrait* when she appeared at meals, and omitted to do every thing she ought to have done: she ceased to walk abroad, and her health was injured; she forgot to feed her lark, and it died; the poor villagers placed under her superintendence were neglected; her harp had not been touched for a month, and her paint-box not opened for two—in short, Susan was a changed being, pale, spiritless, useless, joyless. Mr. Knowlesdon angrily entered her

her chamber, resolved to remonstrate on her altered manners, and, if possible, discover the cause of this havoc in her health and peace.

Poor Susan little expected such a visit, and was caught in the very fact—writing a novel!

Mr. Knowlesdon snatched the unfinished manuscript from her trembling hands, and then favoured her with a pretty little lecture on the folly of wasting the precious hours of youth on such avocations—avocations not only useless, but detrimental, enfeebling and poisoning the mind—"Why, child, you had better be cutting straws or pricking paper."

So ended the worthy lawyer's philippic; but as Susan had a great regard for her literary bantling, and as our readers may perhaps like to peruse a novel from the hands of a young damsel of eighteen, we will give it to them in its pristine form, with all its imperfections on its head.

A DEED WITHOUT A NAME!

THE FATAL EFFECTS OF UNGOVERNED PASSIONS.

A Fragment.

As the coach drove rapidly through Paris, a variety of different emotions agitated its guests. The baron, wrapt in his own sombre meditations, gloomily threw himself into one corner of his vehicle, and only made his presence felt by the angry glances he occasionally darted on his companions. Madame sighed as she gazed on the countenances before her—the stern severity of her husband's expressive features, contrasted with the open manliness of her youthful son. Ferdinand sought to dissipate his mother's sighs by a cheering smile, which however rapidly vanished before the frown of his father.

The young Louisa, artless and innocent,

was

was the only one that risked the expression of her feelings—"Adieu, Paris!" she exclaimed, as its last glimpse disappeared on the horizon; "adieu, dear Paris! adieu to all thy varied delights—thy folly, and thy dissipation!"

"If you lament Paris, Louisa," said Ferdinand, whilst overwhelming recollections flashed across his mind, "what must I do?"

"Do!" cried the baron, starting from his reverie; "why, as your sister—lament its folly and its dissipation."

The ironical tone in which this speech was delivered brought the blood into Ferdinand's cheek; but he knew all remonstrance was vain, and conscious of meriting reproof, bore it with patience; folding his arms, therefore, and shrinking back into his corner, he remained silent and abstracted.

The gentle Louisa, anxious to sooth the wound she had inadvertently opened, changed the subject from retrospect to anticipation: she spoke with enthusiasm of the

the lovely country they were traversing, and gradually drew her mother into conversation. The feelings of Ferdinand were imperceptibly calmed, and even the brow of his father lost its sternness. Such, oh temper! is thy benign influence—not only blessing the bosom thou inhabitest, but spreading on all around a soothing charm!

The season was far advanced, and laughing summer had yielded to the sober tints of autumn. The mellowed hues which coloured the landscape had their beauty to the eye of Louisa, whose gay heart found happiness in every scene—loveliness in every object. To her mother the view spoke a very different language: like the year, her peace had waned—the youth of hope and life had fled together; the grave colouring of autumn indeed harmonized with her feelings, but it painfully harmonized. The summer was past, even as her noon of existence—the few vernal flowers that decked the landscape were like the few joys yet spared to her, reminding

minding her with more bitterness of that blissful season, when they flourished in brighter hues and more profuse luxuriance. She was mournfully indulging in this chronicle of the past, when the voice of her husband roused her to the present.

"Here, Ferdinand, here commences the demesne of your ancestors; *their* virtues gave honour to their inheritance—are you worthy to be their successor?"

Ferdinand blushed.—"Let the future speak for me," said he, after a moment's pause, and then more firmly added—"yet may the inheritance never be mine, whilst my father fears I shall disgrace it!"

"The future!" said the baron; "you are right—the past is already gloomed, and as the present seems to form no part of your calendar, on the future, that future that may never arrive, are built your airy virtues. Oh, Ferdinand! do you bid me expect hereafter that exertion you choose not now to display?"

The appeal, and the manner in which it was

was made, struck deep to the conscious bosom of Ferdinand; he ventured no reply, yet some laudable resolutions of amendment occupied his busy heart.

The close of the third day brought the travellers to the castle, where a long train of ancient domestics waited to receive their lord. The baron De Courcy was dear to his tenantry: though his manners bordered on the stern, yet he well understood the softer affections—he felt their value, though he did not return their tenderness. His very virtues rioted to excess, and it was his overweening love for his son that rendered him thus sensible to his smallest frailties.

Ferdinand's education had been prosecuted with the greatest care: he had been early taught, and had with facility acquired, every manly and graceful accomplishment; the learning of the scholar, the knowledge of the abstruser sciences, he also possessed in a very great degree. But while such pains had been taken to form his

his manners, and to store his mind, the regulation of his passions had been overlooked, or perhaps had been deemed beyond the province of a classical education. Madame de Courcy, had she been permitted, would have supplied this deficiency, and would have inculcated in her son the necessity of self-government; but placed under tutors, and often fixed at a distance from her, she had few opportunities of awakening his heart to the most momentous of its duties—the regulation of its affections and passions.

The young man, early ushered into life, began his career with a spotless reputation, and a taste for pure and refined pleasures. But the society of less amiable and less artless characters drew him by degrees from his high eminence of propriety. His father accidentally met him at a gaming-table—boisterous, intoxicated, inebriated. The shock almost annihilated his reason; scarcely could his limbs bear him from the scene of his dishonour, and he spent the

night in a frenzy of shame and displeasure.

It was in vain for madame to reason, or for his daughter to supplicate; the horrible image of his infatuated and degraded son haunted his imagination, and urged him instantly to quit Paris. The next resolve was to banish for ever from his presence the youthful offender; but his manly contrition softened the severity of his sentence, and on a promise of future unlimited obedience, he was permitted to accompany the family to the castle of De Courcy.

Madame de Courcy was oppressed with a sensation of undefinable dread, on entering, for the first time, this stately but gloomy edifice. De Courcy was not the husband of her choice, and the errors of Ferdinand had given a severity to his manners, which rendered him still less the husband of her heart. The baron had discovered that it was duty, not love, that made Matilda his wife: exemplary as was

her conduct, he felt her esteem a cold return for his impassioned love. At first he had strove to woo her affections; but it was now many years since he had given up the attempt, and, though he still loved his wife, had ceased to consult her happiness.

"Welcome! welcome! my lord and lady!" exclaimed a hundred voices, as the travellers entered their mansion.

The baron's breast swelled with a sense of power and patronage—his wife was only susceptible of a gentle gratitude. An old steward proudly shewed his lord into a spacious apartment, fitted up with Gothic splendour; the baron motioned for him to withdraw, and thus stopped short the garrulous officiousness of the grey-headed vassal. The touching acclamations of his tenantry and domestics had opened the heart of De Courcy, and the glow of pleasure, which still lingered with a rosy tinge on the delicate cheeks of madame, restored to her some of the loveliness of her youth.

The baron, tenderly folding her in his arms, prest her to his bosom, as he said—"Welcome, Matilda, to your domains! What an exile would De Courcy feel without you!"

Louisa sprung towards her father, and throwing herself beside him on the sofa, kissed his forehead, as he threw an arm around her. At this moment Ferdinand entered the room; a pang darted to his heart as he felt himself self-banished from such endearments, and he retreated to a distant window.

Every token of virtue in his son was precious to De Courcy, and he beckoned to the baroness to address him. Madame could not speak, but she held out her hand with a look which could not be misunderstood. Ferdinand flew to imprint on that gracious hand the homage of his corrected heart—madame's tears dropt warm upon his cheek, and recalled his slumbering virtue. He looked timidly at the baron, in whose eye he read all the softened feelings of

of his breast: he never loved his mother, he never reverenced his father, he never reprobated himself, so intensely as at that moment; intuitively he caught his parents' joined hands, and prest them to his lips. Madame cast a look of transport on the baron, who, charmed by the action, ceased to frown upon his son.

The supper passed in cheerfulness, and the light hours, winged by affection, flew gaily over their heads. Louisa forgot her distance from Paris, and ceased to lament its delights. Her father observed with joy the innocent contentment of her mind, that sought and accepted pleasure from every source. The baroness too, in the exultation of the moment, forgot the harshness of De Courcy, and her tenderness gave graces to a scene otherwise gloomy to his eyes.

Ferdinand had been absent a few moments, and now returned with a heightened colour in his cheek.—"I cannot find La Motte," said he, approaching his mo-

ther: "the people tell me Villars discharged him at Paris. How he *dared* to do so without my concurrence, I am at a loss to guess."

"Cease your wonder and your menacing air," said the baron; "it was not Villars, but your father, Ferdinand, that *dared* to discharge La Motte." Ferdinand's lip quivered with indignation. The baron continued his speech—"La Motte was your confidant, not your servant—the first character look for in a higher class, and should the valet I have assigned you not meet your approbation, choose another from among my domestics." Saying this, he left the apartment.

Ferdinand passionately paced the room. —"I am a prisoner then," he cried, "a prisoner attended by spies!—Fool! fool! to resign myself into such hands."

"Be patient, Ferdinand," said madame; "outrage not thus your mother's feelings. Your father has just cause to doubt your firmness. Left to yourself, how did you act?

act? I will not answer my question—your own heart will do it for me."

The mildness of her look pleaded even more strongly than her words—Ferdinand flung himself on a chair, half ashamed, yet half proud of his vehemence.—"Oh, I will try to be patient!" he exclaimed; "I see, I see I shall have good cause."

The return of the baron compelled him to assume a calmer demeanour; and the party soon afterwards separated for the night.

Ferdinand eyed his new valet with no benign scrutiny, and rather sternly bidding him place the lamp on his toilet, commanded him to withdraw.

Colinette in the meantime, with voluble eagerness, was informing her young mistress of all the different ghosts, goblins, and hobgoblins, that had from time immemorial *lived* in the castle. Louisa smiled at her narrative, but felt that, were even spectres allowed to walk the world, they would not approach her guileless spirit.

"You will not sleep alone sure, my lady?"

"Why not, Colinette? What have I to fear?"

"To fear! why, my lady, I—I—I don't know, but I should think ghosts were ugly frights to behold."

"How can you tell? Have you ever seen one?"

Colinette shrieked at the bare idea—"Seen one! mercy, no, my lady."

"Then don't believe there are any till you do; and now go to bed, my good girl."

Colinette tremblingly obeyed, and deemed her lady a miracle of courage, not to fear ghosts; she did not reckon upon her secret talisman against base fears—an innocent heart and a sustaining piety.

Louisa, sinking on her knees, performed her evening service of prayer, or rather of thanksgiving; for her heart was so full of gratitude, that she worshipped only to praise. Her light extinguished, she retired to her bed, and soon lost all remembrance

brance of castled spectres in a tranquil slumber. The moonbeam slept on her closed eyes, fit light for the placid brow it illumed; her glowing cheek, as it prest her pillow, now and then dimpled into smiles, and augured heavenly visions.

Very different were Ferdinand's sensations—irritated, offended, angry, his passions were working into a frightful ferment. Half conscious of his demerit, he yet, like a coward, threw the blame due to himself on others; father, associates—all were censured—all but himself. Neither De Courcy nor his son possessed the virtues of forbearance and patience, and their mutual impetuosity hurried each into extremes.

Ferdinand seldom looked beyond the present moment, and the one now arrived seemed to his half-frenzied imagination to concentrate all that was debasing and wretched. He strode along his chamber with unequal steps—he fancied bars in every window, and bolts in every door. The

night-breeze moaned over the bending forest, and the same silver beam that reposed so sweet on the tranquil brow of his sister fell on his pale and haggard countenance with terrific hues. He retired from the open casement, and as he approached his toilet, the rays of his lamp depicted in the mirror the wild expression of his features. He started, and, as if willing to escape the train of accusing thoughts that sight caused, he seized the lamp and began to explore his chamber. It was spacious, and exhibited a mixture of ancient and modern magnificence — the pictures of his ancestors frowned around him, and the rich tapestry depicted bloody wars. Ferdinand had a large portion of romance, mingled with the curiosity natural to his age; and just at that moment of his life could have dared deeds that would have shunned the light. He rejoiced, therefore, to discover a small door, whose tattering appearance promised to reward the inquisitive intruder, and he burst its rusted bolt:

bolt: the door sprung back, and Ferdinand found himself at the head of a narrow staircase. The decayed steps trembled beneath his tread, as he rapidly descended, and after some minutes winding round the centre pillar (hung with damps, and crumbling to his touch), he found himself in a low-roofed passage, which led to a door thickly studded with nails, and transversed with iron bands. "A prison!" murmured Ferdinand, starting back, while a cold dew gathered on his forehead; but making an effort, he rushed to the door, and found it yield to his touch. His lamp now feebly illuminated a vaulted apartment; the windows were small and strongly barred, and a few articles of furniture shewed it capable of tenanting a human being. Urged on by an inexplicable but breathless curiosity, Ferdinand moved forwards: his steps sounded mournfully, and seemed to speak his solitude. He looked up; the windows were below the level of the adjacent soil—he was in a subterraneous dungeon, many

yards beneath the surface of the cheerful earth. He shuddered, and approached another door at the farther end; but in a moment he stopped, and a new object convulsed his whole frame—against the wall hung a chain, which, from its strength and situation, was evidently fixed to secure some prisoner. It had been so used—or was it yet to be so used? The last conjecture fixed with fearful power on the diseased mind of Ferdinand: he stood rooted to the spot—reason, affection, experience, gave way before the overwhelming tide of passion. He was in that state of impetuous indignation that he was almost glad to believe his worst fears were realized; he desired cause for anger and misery—here he fancied he had found it, and could almost have smiled in bitterness at his success. He felt himself faulty: he had made his father his judge, had yielded himself into his power, and sworn implicit obedience to his will; that father's disposition he perfectly knew—accustomed to command,

command, both as a general and a feudal baron, his spirit was haughty and domineering—accustomed to submission, accustomed to dictate laws and punishments, he deemed little of fettering the criminal, or immuring the guilty. These ideas rapidly succeeding each other, formed a chain of evidence that convinced Ferdinand he was standing in his own prison, viewing his own destined chains; his thoughts became wild, his vision indistinct, and every object arose enlarged or distorted to his eye. The lamp, left in a distant corner, glimmered faintly—an expiring flame, whose fitful illumination gave a momentary brilliance to each horrible object, and then sinking to transient darkness, left a pause for the disordered imagination to create its own fearful offspring. The wind moaned along the narrow galleries, and a ruder blast now and then swept against the shattered casements, and as it whistled along the vault, threatened to extinguish the feeble light—all was horror to the diseased

eased mind of Ferdinand — How many such nights might he spend there?—The thought was madness—he seized his lamp, and rushed through the farther door; it led to an open colonnade, where the breeze of night in a moment extinguished the flickering flame.

Ferdinand stopped for a moment, and as he stood panting for breath, he caught the sound of distant steps: he listened—all was again silent, save the blast rushing over his head; again he heard the tread of feet, but the sound was lost in the toll of the chapel bell striking the midnight hour. The moon cast a pale light, that barely served to mark the outline of the most prominent objects, the massy pillar, the broken arch; the vaulted roof was lost in shadow. The steps now approached; Ferdinand drew his sword, but his quick-drawn breath attracted the unknown. In a moment Ferdinand felt himself grasped by a powerful arm, and his sword wrenched from his hold. Self-preservation now seemed

seemed to urge forth all the strength of the agitated young man. He wrestled with his opponent, recovered his sword, and plunged it into the stranger's body. The wounded man instantly fell, grasping his antagonist; the moon at that moment emerged from a fleecy cloud, and fell with full radiance on his countenance. Ferdinand sprung up with a convulsive start—cold dews stood on his forehead—every limb quivered with agony—it was his father!

Ferdinand knew not what followed, for horror had palsied his mind and body; but the wretched baron had crawled some paces from him, where he fainted with loss of blood. There his steward found him, as he followed with a torch; he bore his master to the inhabited part of the castle, and when the first bustle of the scene was over, the domestics had orders to explore the vault—No one could be found either there or in the dungeon.

Ferdinand, still grasping his sword, had crept

crept to his chamber, in a state of stupefaction, scarcely sensible what he was about, till a loud cry at his door awoke him to the terrible truth. Hastily placing his sabre in its sheath, he admitted the messenger, who, in tremulous accents, recounted the mournful accident.

"He then yet lives!" exclaimed Ferdinand, in a voice of profound agony.

"Yes, my lord, but we fear——"

A stroke on the brain would have been ease to the pang these words inflicted on the despairing Ferdinand. He, however, summoned up his force, and tottered to the chamber of the baron: he found him supported on the bosom of the baroness, whose fixed look of despair was contrasted to the loud plaints of the weeping Louisa. De Courcy smiled languidly upon his son, who, sinking on his knee, clasped his cold hand in his own: the wildness of his look, the marble sharpness of his features, the convulsive movements of his limbs, spoke emotion beyond common agitation.

The

The baron was touched by this proof of filial attachment, and speaking with difficulty, said—"Be composed—I may yet recover."

"If you do not," exclaimed Ferdinand, in a voice of supernatural hollowness——.

"Patience, my son," answered De Courcy, in a tone of most unwonted kindness; "but whatever my fate, may Heaven bless you, my child!"

Ferdinand sprung from the ground, and clasping his hands together, looked up with a piteous expression; but his exhausted frame was incapable of further effort, and he fainted into the arms of the surrounding attendants.

In a few days, the baron was pronounced on the recovery, but the fever of Ferdinand had reached his brain, and he was in the wildest paroxysm of frenzy. His life-blood seemed dried up by the raging malady, and his vigour shrunk beneath its dominion. He raved on his murdered father till the powers of utterance failed: an

an interval of stupefaction intervened. Then in piteous accents he prayed for mercy and forgiveness. At length his rapidly exhausting body approached its dissolution, and the fever having no longer food to prey on, gradually gave way, and the mind of the wretched invalid revived to sanity. When he recovered his recollection, he found himself supported in the arms of his father, but nature was too much enfeebled to be injured by the surprise; his mother and his sister were there also; the attendants had withdrawn. Ferdinand gazed in silence on each endeared face once more with the glance of recognition. He arose from the sustaining embrace of his father, and seemed about to speak. Louisa sunk upon her knees, and pressing her face on his cold hand, bathed it with her warm tears. The mother could not weep; her spirit seemed centered in her straining eye, to watch her child's last glance, and then soar with him to more congenial realms. The big drops coursed

coursed each other down the cheeks of De Courcy, and he appeared to have summoned all his courage for this hour of trial.

Ferdinand's lips had moved more than once in inaudible efforts; but turning to the baron, while his eye for a moment beamed with lustre, and a slight suffusion tinged his cheek, he addressed him in low but clear tones—"There is a room, my lord, a vault beneath my chamber, fitted to receive a criminal—a prisoner."

"True, it has been so used."

"Has been, my lord?"

"Yes, but its tenant was enfranchised some few weeks before our arrival hither."

Ferdinand groaned aloud, and covered his face with his hands.

"Whence this agitation, my dear son?"

Ferdinand looked up with a quick movement, and gazed intently upon his father; then, as if recollecting himself, clasped his hands in the attitude of supplication, and murmured—"Forgive me!"

"Alas!

"Alas! what have I to forgive? Be calm, my son."

"Every way guilty—in thought as in act," said Ferdinand, passionately.

"Ill-fated victim to filial love!" cried the baron, fondly folding him in his arms.

With a strong effort he wrenched himself from his father's embrace, and looking wildly around—"Where am I?" he cried; "do I yet breathe?"

The groupe closed around him; the baron holding him in a powerful grasp, whilst madame sought to sustain his head, and Louisa firmly grasped his hand. In a moment the transient energy of frenzy passed, and the exhausted Ferdinand sunk into a chill stupor.

The wretched mother believed him dead, and fell senseless on his outstretched form. In this state the attendants bore her from the chamber, and her daughter rallying her scattered spirits, followed to watch and aid her recovery.

The

The baron commanding the domestics to withdraw, hung in mournful silence over the yet breathing body of his son. Ferdinand slowly revived, and a strong cordial administered by his attentive father yet more invigorated his sinking powers. "Something is wrong here," said he, pressing his throbbing temples. The baron implored him to spare his remaining strength, but Ferdinand shook his head, and threw his eye around the room.

"We are alone," said the baron, understanding the meaning of that searching glance.

"'Tis well," replied his son; "and now tell me, my father, why went you at such an hour to that lone vault?"

De Courcy would willingly have evaded an answer, but Ferdinand besought a reply.

"My people feared the presence of spectres there—I rather anticipated concealed banditti; but, resolved on instant discovery, rashly ventured alone. Ere Villars joined me, I encountered a ruffian, whom I essayed to

to detain; but, urged by fear, he plunged his rescued dagger in my body."

Various was the expression that flitted over the countenance of Ferdinand, as he listened to this brief explanation. Both were silent a few moments; Ferdinand then spoke—"Give me my sabre, my father."

The sabre was presented to him; he drew it slowly from its scabbard—its edge was deeply stained with blood. He looked towards his father, as if to ask him whether that sight told its own story. De Courcy in breathful earnestness watched the scene; a confused expectation of the event went sickening to his heart—he felt as if the crisis of his fate approached. In an instant, Ferdinand plunged the weapon into his own bosom.

"Rash young man!" cried the baron, "why this desperate deed?"

"Blood must expiate blood," murmured Ferdinand.

"Ha! the stranger——"

"The ruffian was your son," said Ferdinand,

dinand, articulating the words with difficulty.

In vain the baron sought to staunch the wound—the life-blood issued fast. Ferdinand with desperate force drew out the weapon; the point was now gouted with fresher drops—his eye gazed upon it till its glance slowly lost its object, and closed upon all earthly vision—he sighed heavily, and fell back a corpse. The baron was discovered watching the senseless clay, almost as still, as cold, as pale, as the form he watched.

CHAPTER XI.

Honour and Honesty.

Mrs. Egerton, with her little girl in her hand, had walked into the village—reader, forgive her homeliness—to pay her quarterly bills. She was disbursing the last of these,

these, at a small shop, dealing in multifarious articles, when the mournful voice and swollen eyes of the shopwoman attracted her notice. There was something so potent in the appearance of suppressed affliction, that Mrs. Egerton, with all her fortitude (and few could boast more), ineffectually strove against its dominion. Her own eyes filled with tears, as she asked and heard the tale of humble woe—a distress (how bitterly appropriate is the term!) was in the house.

Mrs. Egerton was not apt to bound her compassion to sympathizing tears—less was she disposed to stop short in the work of benevolence. She entreated to see the wretched family, and was admitted.

In the small apartment, that in better days was the happy scene of industry, concord, and content, what a groupe now appeared!

Two stern-looking men were taking an inventory of the humble furniture, and one had just laid his hand on a wicker cradle,

cradle, in which an infant yet slept, unconscious of the work of ruin. An old, a very old man, with clasped hands sat near a decaying fire, no longer blazing for the cheerful meal; his son, struggling with his own grief, sought to whisper consolation to his wife, whose uncontrollable affliction vented itself in loud sobs and cries. A young boy, half frightened, clung to his mother for protection, whilst his sister, clasping her father's arm, wept, unknowing why.

The men completed their duty, and retired. Mrs. Egerton, hushing the plaints of her own frightened child, sought to sooth the sorrow she beheld, and to discover its source. The tale was soon told—*they could not pay, because themselves were not paid.*

The young man produced his books; Mrs. Egerton found it difficult to believe her sight: the names of the most opulent persons in the village and its vicinity in deep arrears—lady Ruthven, lady Wrong-

head, Miss Muddleton, Mrs. Mansel.—"Why do not you send in these bills?"

"Bless you, madam, we have sent, and sent, and sent, but no money can we get; some tell us to call again—some promise payment, and do not keep their word—some bid us not be impertinent."

"And would the payment of these bills relieve you?"

"Dear, madam! pay all our debts, and leave pounds to spare."

Mrs. Egerton promised to see what could be done, and slipping a two-pound note into the old man's hand, retired before he had recovered from his surprise.

And well might he be surprised, for we do confess this is an almost incredible fact, yet we have reasons for believing it possible. To be sure, two pounds—that is, forty shillings, eighty sixpences, the general mode of dividing and calculating money disbursed in benefactions, to clearly ascertain its full value—forty shillings is a considerable sum. Having defined its extent,

tent, it naturally follows that what it could purchase should be discovered—" a handsome fan," says the matron; " a charming feather," says the maiden; " the last new novel," says the female pedant.

Now for all these purposes the aforesaid two pounds—we only speak of its fractional parts when we bestow—the aforesaid two pounds would have been smilingly paid——we do not mean to infer that it is by any means *necessary* to pay for what is purchased—far from us be all such homely maxims!—we only mention the possibility of such an event, to prove that ladies do sometimes produce the large sum here named; that they do so for articles which are of no earthly use to themselves, or any body else, and that hence it is within the verge of possibility that Mrs. Egerton did part with the enormous sum of forty shillings, for no better purpose than the service of a wretched family.

Mrs. Egerton proceeded with lightened purse, and, if report speaks true, with

lightened heart, to Mrs. Knowlesdon. This lady was at home, and she briefly imparted to her the events of the morning, with only two omissions—she did not mention her own donation, probably ashamed of her weakness, or of her extravagance; nor did she give the name of lady Ruthven in the list of debtors: the reason for this last omission we cannot so readily divine, such acts being out of our way—it looked very like generosity, but "*le vraisemblable n'est pas toujours le vrai*," happily recurs to us, and saves us from the hazard of attributing false motives to actions.

Lady Ruthven's carriage at this moment rolled past, and as her ladyship looked out of the window, she displayed a bonnet profusely decorated with ribbon.

"Those very ribbons were purchased at the wretched abode I have just left," thought Mrs. Egerton; "lady Ruthven condescends to dress at the expence of a poor little village shopkeeper."

Mrs. Egerton ought to have spoken her thoughts,

thoughts, for they were deliciously sarcastic, and consequently delightfully entertaining; but though she could not restrain her excursive ideas, she could command her speech, and never willingly uttered a syllable that could either give pain or dispense obloquy: nay, so far did she carry this ridiculous taciturnity, that she would not repeat the sentiments of another, if those sentiments were at all likely to cause discord, or were intended to be concealed; for so many people talk without thought, that numerous disclosures are unintentionally made. Now, whether such an exposition was, or was not followed with—"Pray, my dear Mrs. Egerton, do not repeat what I have said," Mrs. Egerton preserved a sacred silence—But there is no end to the list of this woman's oddities.

The entrance of Mrs. Mansel disturbed the friendly *tête-à-tête*. Mrs. Knowlesdon profited by the opportunity to describe the mournful fate of the distressed tradesman.

"Dear me, how shocking!" cried Mrs. Mansel, with tearful eyes; "I will call and give them all the silver I have in my pocket."

"That will be very kind, but I fear such help will be insufficient," said Mrs. Mary.

"Then what must be done?" asked Mrs. Mansel.

"All their debtors must pay their bills, and then they will be enabled to pay their creditors. My dear Mrs. Mansel, do you owe them any thing?"

"Oh dear! to be sure I do; and I have intended, day after day, to call, but something has always prevented me."

"Will you do it to-day?"

Mrs. Mansel's compassion had nearly evaporated in the burst of tears and the proffered silver: the payment of a bill was such an insipid commonplace affair—so inferior to the novel cut of calling on a miserable family, and emptying a purse into the withered hand of poverty!

"You

"You will be doing an essential service, and ensuring to yourself the blessing of those ready to perish."

The pathos of this speech of Mrs. Egerton's again wound up the chords of pity to the right pitch, and Mrs. Mansel departed, to enjoy the "luxury of woe."

"How some of us must be coaxed into our duty!" said Mrs. Mary; "but come, my friend, let us hasten to the Hall."

In passing through the village, Mrs. Mansel was seen at the rustic milliner's, cheapening artificial flowers. Mrs. Mary trembled for the poor creditor.—"These flowers will play sad tricks in Mrs. Mansel's memory—we must refresh it." She therefore entered the shop, and waited with admirable patience till the important point was decided, whether vine-leaves or hop-leaves were the more new and elegant.

So many minutes were lost in this momentous selection, that when the ladies reached the shop, the constables were ac-

tually seizing the unfortunate tradesman, his moveables being inadequate to satisfy his merciless creditor.

"And who is this harsh creditor?" inquired Mrs. Knowlesdon.

"My landlord, madam."

"How! the lord of the manor, the member of parliament, the public-spirited lord Rochfort!"

"Ah, madam! he knows nothing of our distress! he seldom visits his estates, and leaves us tenants to the mercy of his steward."

The man wept bitterly as he spoke; his wife and children clung to him in all the wildness of ungoverned sorrow. "A prison—a prison for my poor son!" lowly murmured his aged father.

Mrs. Mansel turned pale at the scene before her; her heart was oppressed beyond the furthest point of melancholy pleasure. She paid her bill, and blushed to have that received as a favour which she knew was a right.

a right.—" Dear me! I never could have thought my omitting to pay a bill would have assisted to cause all this trouble."

At the request of Mrs. Mary Knowlesdon, who, though an old maid, and a poor old maid, seemed to inspire the officers of justice with a due sense of her respectability, the poor man was granted his liberty for another day.

Mrs. Mansel walked home, sadly musing on the consequences of her procrastination. In her parlour she found the lovely hop-wreath, and whilst adjusting it amidst her luxuriant tresses, being told the washer-woman had called, for the third time, for the amount of her bill—" Then pray bid her come again, I am so particularly engaged just now."

Mrs. Egerton moved homewards, for she had much upon her hands; but the spinster having nothing better to do, proceeded to the Hall, to prosecute the work of charity.

Random Hall, as well as its mistress,

seemed doomed to elicit the charm of contrast. How different the apartment and the group now before her, to the apartment and the group Mrs. Mary last beheld!—There virtuous industry, amidst want and oppression, amiable and respectable—here indolence and discontent, amidst splendour and power, repining and contemptible.

The party were taken by surprise; indeed, Mrs. Mary being a relation, it was of no consequence how they looked, or what they were about. Miss Patty was deep in a novel—Miss Wronghead singing a bravura—sir Gabriel *studying* a newspaper, and now and then looking up, to entreat for an English song, and sending all the "Italianos" to the devil, in a variety of ways.

Miss Wronghead, however, was not educated to make her talents subservient to such homely purposes as the amusement of a father; she wished to astonish, not please—to be admired, not approved.

Lady

Lady Wronghead was loudly calling to order the three little girls, who were supposed to be learning French, under the tuition of their accomplished sister.

Master Sammy was learning his alphabet, by the aid of a newly-invented game, it being judged more easy to learn the multifarious rules of this play, than the letters without them. The plan so far succeeded, that Sam knew all the forfeits and rewards, and only forgot the knowledge they shackled.

The heir had not yet issued from his toilet, where, *à la mode de Paris*, he was "adonizing" himself.

Though it was difficult, amid this concourse of sweet sounds (for Miss Patty always read aloud to herself), to be very distinctly heard, yet Mrs. Mary did contrive to enter into discourse, and the bravura being finished, a comparative calm ensued.

Miss Patty laid aside her book, for, from motives best known to herself, she was always "vastly purlite" to the sister

of Mr. Solicitor Knowlesdon—we ought, perhaps, to have said Mr. Bachelor Knowlesdon, that expletive giving a better clue to the spinster's feelings; for, as she would have reminded us with a sigh, to *her* he was no "solicitor"—Heigh-ho!

Mrs. Mary very early introduced the tale of woe, that had caused her visit; but she managed badly, for it appeared to the circle as if she came to sue for pecuniary aid.

A sort of awkward pause ensued, and except a guinea promptly produced by the baronet, cash seemed rather scarce at the Hall. The fact, we understand, was, that a smuggler was expected to call that very morning, with feathers and French gloves, and of course the ladies would want all their spare funds.

Miss Patty indeed (as if upon second thoughts) squeezed out a shilling and a tear for the service "of the poor wretches;" and Jack, who had popped in at this point of the debate, fairly emptied the contents

of

of his waistcoat pocket, his only treasury, into the hands of Mrs. Mary, one pound fifteen shillings and five-pence halfpenny, though by doing so he left himself without a sous. He then ran away, to procure the gift of his wealthier elder brother, and had the unexpected affliction to hear that he had not a shilling in the world! Jack stood transfixed with horror, and would probably have sunk under this calamity, had not his failing spirits been revived by the appearance of Fripon, the valet of Adam Wronghead, Esq. with a bottle of "otto of roses," and three pounds ten shillings, the residue change of a five-pound bill.

Jack instinctively held out his hand for some share of the prize, but seeing the whole snugly lodged in the pocket of the beau, he very undutifully sent his brother to the devil, for a hard-hearted sensualist, and then bouncing out of the room, slammed the door as if willing to try the strength of its hinges.

Mrs. Mary, in the meantime, had brought

brought the whole parlour party to a perfect understanding of what she thought they ought to do—to wit, pay their so long owed debts. How she effected this illumination, it would be difficult to explain, for perhaps, of all the Herculean labours imposed on good-nature, the most perplexing is to inform people they have done wrong, and counsel them how to do right. How many friendships have been dissolved by such intimations! how many *dear* acquaintance changed to rancorous enemies! how many dislikes generated, that no after kindness could annul!

"I hope we do not owe any thing, my love?" said sir Gabriel; "you know you can command my purse."

The lady was perfectly aware of the extent of her power.—"Owe any thing! certainly not. I order Sanders to pay every bill as it becomes due."

"But are you sure Sanders obeys your orders?"

What lady chooses to have her good management

management doubted?—Lightning instantly darted from lady Wronghead's eyes: to avoid the thunder that threatened to follow, Mrs. Mary kindly interposed.—"I know your orders are always considerate, lady Wronghead—my brother only fears your housekeeper is not equally conscientious."

Oh, heavenly mildness! sweet charm of female influence! beneath thy power, the stormier passions hush, the wild emotions die! Oh! ever thus attune the lip, illume the eye of woman, and aid her in her truest province—to sooth, correct, refine!

Lady Wronghead's anger vanished; she listened to the voice of reason, and consented to prove the fidelity of Sanders. The bell was rung, and the dismayed housekeeper summoned.

It is not pleasant to delineate scenes of altercation, and lady Wronghead generally contrived to make her domestic censures take that form. She reproached rather than reproved—provoked rather than convinced:

convinced: however, it was discovered that Mrs. Sanders had not paid the bills, having lent the money on good security and reasonable interest.

She retired, under a positive command of instantly paying every bill—sir Gabriel simply remarking—"This comes of depending too much on other people."

The fair Clementina had made several attempts to slip out of the room without observation. Miss Patty had happily succeeded, and withdrew, announcing her solemn resolution that her account should be settled ere she again prest her solitary pillow—a promise she kept just as faithfully as she had done some half-dozen others she had as sacredly given.

"Clemy, are you in the books of these poor people?"

Miss Clemy had just gained the door, but stopped at her father's question, and carelessly replied—"Some few shillings, sir."

Jack's mischievous fingers at that moment

ment drew out of the elegant writing-desk of his sister a paper, which that sister flew back to rescue from his gripe.—But holding it far above her reach, he audibly pronounced—" *Pro bono publico!* — Miss Wronghead debtor to James Twist—ribbons, flowers, gauze, catguts, fringe——"

He was proceeding, when sir Gabriel angrily vociferated—" Stop, stop, for Heaven's sake!"

" Nay, my dear sir, allow me to go on; I have not read half the list—and just below I see some *invisible petticoats*."

" Invisible with a witness!" said the baronet, measuring with his eye the slim form of his sullen daughter; " what is the amount, Jack? that is all I want to know."

" Sixteen pounds seventeen shillings and nine-pence three farthings!" holloed out Jack, as if calling to a man at the masthead; " more than one of my half-yearly payments, by Jericho!"

The

The lady declared the thing impossible; but seeing, we have been told, is believing, Jack held the fatal paper before her eyes, and she was silenced.

"Produce your money," said sir Gabriel.

Miss Wronghead declared her poverty; "she had no money," which avowal Jack, judging from his experience with his brother, pronounced a hoax; but it was, in the present instance, proved to be a stubborn fact.

Sir Gabriel therefore advanced the sum, swearing it should be deducted from her next quarterly allowance.

"And now, Mr. Facetious, pray tell us what Mr. Jack Wronghead is indebted to this same James Twist?" said Miss Clementina Henrietta Maria Wronghead, not exactly in the feminine tones so lately applauded and recommended.

"Nothing, most amiable Dulcinea, nothing," replied Jack, approaching his sister, and profoundly bowing before her: "it

" it becomes not a British sailor to strut in borrowed plumes—I wear nothing that is not my own."

" Bravo, my lad!" cried sir Gabriel; " I thank God I have one honest heart in my family; and as you just now very imprudently cleared yourself of all your cash, here are ten pounds for you, to keep you in gloves till pay-day comes round."

Jack thanked his father with a warmth which argued that something more than mere self-interest was touched within him—as if he loved the praise more than the reward. Then bounding away, at the command of the baronet, to pay his sister's bill, could not help, for the soul of him, sharing his ten pounds with poor James Twist—Oh, the extravagant prodigal!

CHAP-

CHAPTER XII.

The Senses and Sensibilities.

A HEAVY storm of wind and rain seemed to threaten Mrs. Mary's detention at the Hall for the rest of the day, especially as Jack announced, on his return from the village, the deplorable state of the roads.

Sir Gabriel kindly urged his sister's remaining where she was, and offered to dispatch a servant to inform Mr. Knowlesdon of the arrangement.

Miss Patty suggested the propriety of inviting that gentleman to join the social circle.

The baronet did not by any means see the necessity of informing a brother he should be welcome at a brother's house, or why the solicitor should be required to encounter the rough elements, from which it was deemed

deemed kind to rescue Mrs. Mary; but as he invariably obliged every body, whenever he possibly could, he promised to make the desired addenda.

But Mrs. Mary was not found very accommodating—she must return home.

"Why, Mary, what have you to do at home? You single women are so independent!"

Mrs. Mary smiled, as her eye fell on the supine figure of the speaker, as she thought upon her freedom from care, her unfettered free-will—as she thought upon her own occupied life. But she only replied by repeating the necessity for her returning home.

Lady Wronghead pressed the inquiry no further: in fact, she was not willing to urge a succinct enumeration of Mrs. Knowlesdon's home claims—the image of Mrs. Rachael Wronghead, the sick, feeble, petulant invalid, never presented itself without irritating recollections.

Perhaps our readers may wonder poor Rachael

Rachael has been so little mentioned in these memoirs; but, truly, the fault is not ours—she was seldom mentioned by any body; though "at early morn and latest eve" Mrs. Mary was at her side—though night after night the midnight bell found her watching her sick pillow—though day after day she sacrificed every selfish amusement, to sooth the weariness of the splenetic sufferer—though every hour was marked by some order to procure her comfort, some arrangement to humour her whims, nothing of all this unceasing train of active and passive kindness was discoverable in her words. If she declined a pleasurable engagement, retired from an agreeable circle, or occupied herself in avocations inimical to her taste and wishes, she did not proclaim why she made these sacrifices—she asked no pity for the hardness of her lot—she vaunted not, directly or indirectly, of the immensity of her exertions; her stilly footstep was as noiseless in the chamber of the invalid as her voice was silent

lent on the routine of her ceaseless labour.

How different the fair Patty!—Once every month, if possible, she visited, for five minutes, Mrs. Rachael—with how kind a motive!—to repeat to all her acquaintance, for the next twenty-seven days, how the dear invalid was looking, when she, as usual, sat with her the other day.

The moment a fine gleam intervened, Mrs. Mary hastened home, escorted by the butler, Jack having in vain implored for a second drenching.

Lady Wronghead declared nothing could be more provoking than the coach-horse to be ill during such weather.

Reader, do not be in haste to applaud her sisterly feeling, but hear her to the end of her lamentations.

"So teazing—*I* cannot go out to-day."

If we have not already expressed as much, we must be our own commentators,

and

and explain that the temper of this lady was not of the gentlest nor sweetest composition—the tart predominated over the mild ingredients.

It is certainly a little mortifying to our descriptive powers, thus to explain characters that ought to have developed themselves, and to be obliged, like bad painters, to put the name under the delineation of the figure, as "this is a cow," lest it should be taken for an elephant; or "this is a rose," for fear it might be thought an oak—but if we are such awkward draughtsmen, we must patiently pay the penalty of our unskilfulness.

The day continued cold and gloomy; lady Wronghead, shivering and uneasy, pronounced herself "miserably cold;" fresh faggots were piled on the hearth, and another shawl thrown round her form.—"Pray, Jack, shut the door—it is always left open—James has no sense of feeling."

"He should have, madam," replied Jack, "for he has been cooling himself these

these two hours, washing bottles in an out-house; he should have a fellow-feeling for you."

Lady Wronghead was not talking about *fellow*-feeling. She rose to cross the hall; her own maid was there, holding the house-door partially open, and now asked if her ladyship would please to relieve that poor negro—"He is cold, wet, hungry—a stranger, my lady."

"Bless me, Margaret! where is your feeling? Don't you see how the damp air blows in upon me?—Shut the door, pray—Never had woman such unfeeling servants!"

Margaret shewed her feeling, and shut the door upon the unrelieved, cold, wet, and hungry stranger, who mournfully retired, "to seek a shelter in a humbler shed;" not, however, before Jack had thrown up the dining-room window, and flung a crown into his hat.

Lady Wronghead's absence saved Jack from censure for this unfeeling act, as his

father did not deem the chilliness of a cold blast too dear a price for the chance of benefiting a friendless wanderer.

Miss Clemy, to be sure, shrugged up her shoulders, and asked her brother what he meant by such thoughtlessness?

Jack had no excuse to offer, but his inability to keep a shilling in his purse, when his fellow-creature wanted it; and his sister's exclamation—"Ridiculous folly!" was only answered by his rather loudly warbling—"They that wants pity, why I pities they."

The dinner appeared. Lady Wronghead found some fault in every dish on the table: the soup was too thick.

"You thought it too thin yesterday, my love."

"I know that, sir Gabriel; but though I don't like it as thick as a pudding, that is no reason I should have it as thin as water—there is reason in all things."

Sir Gabriel knew that well, and he knew also that every general rule had some exceptions—

ceptions—lady Wronghead, for instance, had she any reason?—But he went on eating his soup.

"And this mutton—it is roasted to a chip!"

The baronet looked upon the exuding gravy, as he poured half-a-dozen spoonfuls on the slice destined for his better-half—but he risked no reasoning.

Jack carelessly exclaimed—"You complained sadly of the under-done haunch last week, mother."

"Well, sir, and is that any reason why this leg should be burnt to a cinder?"

Reason again! The word bothered sir Gabriel, as "feeling" had in the morning annoyed his son, and he drank wine with Miss Patty, the better to gulp it down.

Bright was the fire round which the circle closed; in vain the wind roared against the well-glazed window—in vain the rain pattered on the slated roof—not one blast, not one drop, found its way into the noble saloon; nevertheless, poor lady Wronghead

pronounced it impossible to be comfortable in such weather, and shivered and shrugged her shoulders, as if exposed to every bitter gale.—" Such a miserable season—chilly raw air—gusts enough to blow one down—melancholy sound—mournful howlings!"

" Ay, madam, for the sailor on the giddy mast," said Jack.

" For the houseless wanderer on the lonely heath," said sir Gabriel.

" Oh, they are all used to it."

" I see people do not value comfort because they are accustomed to it," replied sir Gabriel; " how far use reconciles to suffering, is another question."

Adam Wronghead, Esq. after an enlivening yawn, increased the gaiety of the hour, by vowing it was always such miserable dirty weather in this vile country—but when he was abroad——

" You had only siroccos to scorch you, or earthquakes to engulph you, or avalanches to bury you," said the baronet.

Young

Young Hopeful shut his mouth, after an immeasurable long yawn, and wisely kept it shut.

Miss Patty lamented the "sceptibility" of her nerves, which made her so exquisitely alive to suffering, and saved the company the trouble of guessing whose suffering, by desiring the stable-boy might be sent to the village, for the last volume of "Exquisite Distress."—"My feelings won't let me sleep to night, if I am kept in suspense."

"And my feelings won't let me sleep to-night," said Jack, "for thinking of the luckless urchin that is to face this storm."

Miss Patty looked as if she could not understand what he meant. Certainly he was not thinking about the inconvenience the stable boy might endure in leaving his snug chimney-corner, to paddle three miles through rain, wind, and darkness, half asleep, and weary, after a "day's long labour." What was the boy kept for? what was his health, his comfort, in comparison to Miss Patty Muddleton's slightest

whim?—Ridiculous! the poor, indeed, to complain of winds and weather! the poor to be selfish!

Though truly that is no easy matter—the rich pretty well monopolize all selfishness to themselves.

The boy went for the book, but on his return, Miss Patty was so delightfully engrossed with a pool at quadrille, that the volume was ordered to be put aside.

In the fury of his anger, the unhallowed hands of Jack had nearly consigned it to the flames, for Miss Patty did not look at it for a week.

But however intense Miss Patty's "sceptibility," her sister's delicacy was yet more acute. Lady Wronghead's senses were indeed so exquisite, that they were always tormenting her—whether this is the service for which senses are bestowed, is a question we leave to the discussion of our sagacious readers—our present business is with lady Wronghead.—"I have such an unfortunate nose, I smell every thing in a moment,

moment, and there is always some disagreeable scent to offend me; take away those flowers—they are too sweet for me. To be sure, mine is such an unlucky taste—I can discover the slightest unpleasant flavour. How you are eating those peaches, sir Gabriel!—they have a something, I know not what, that makes them very unpalatable, at least to my taste. You all of you enjoyed the music last night—Well, that was so odd to me, for my ear was offended a hundred times. Jack, your blackbird must be removed; I hear it sometimes, and its notes do so jar upon my ear. Oh, my dear, I am sure that is your uncle in the park. My sight is so remarkably clear—it is quite a misfortune to be so quick-sighted.—Indeed, Mr. Twist, chilly as I am, I cannot buy a stuff-gown, my touch is so wretchedly susceptible: I cannot describe how, but I should have such a feel every time my hand fell on my dress."

One, two, three, four, five—so many were the plagues of lady Wronghead; but

we shall make the philosopher shudder (if indeed any philosopher ever deigns to peruse our unscientific page) when we add, that lady Wronghead also deplored the existence of her nerves.

"If it were not for my nerves! if I had not these vile nerves!" were the phrases with which her ladyship generally preluded her lamentations.

Now, without presuming to hint the *few* services performed by these exquisitely minute cords, we will proceed to sympathize with her ladyship on the enormous mass of suffering they must have caused her to endure—for what part of the frame is free from their influence? Poor dear lady Wronghead! well might she complain that she could feel to her very fingers' ends.

Mrs. Mary Knowlesdon either had not any nerves, or those she had were not *feeling** nerves—certainly she did not make half

* This is not tautology; the expletive was necessary—why

half the use of her nerves or her feelings that her lady-sister did; for she had an odd notion, that feelings were to be felt, rather than expressed, whilst lady Wronghead more wisely studied her own comfort, and satisfied herself with expressing rather than feeling her feelings—for had she felt all she expressed, Heavens! what storied martyr could have matched her sufferings! and this too as only relating to herself. Let us charitably hope her pangs of sympathy were as much milder as they were fewer.

Miss Patty shewed her "sceptibility," as she persisted in calling it (and really the term was as appropriate as any—susceptibility would have been sadly out of place), principally in weeping over tales of elegant distress; for, be it noted, by-the-bye, that heroes and heroines are at all times elegant. Crying, in common life, generally distorts the features in sometimes a rather

 ludicrous

why should there not be nerves without feeling, since it is so perpetually remarked, how many hearts are devoid of it?

ludicrous manner; heroines, therefore, here shew their superiority over mere flesh and blood, inasmuch as weeping makes their beauty more beautiful. How they contrive it, we do not know, but we think the physical operation ought to be explained, for the benefit of living damsels, who might, in that case, be tempted to weep with those that weep. To blush also is always pretty; heroines blush whenever they please—mortal maidens cannot when they ought; if they could be taught to blush now and then, just for a novelty! Heroes have also such advantages! dead, dying, hanging, drowning, they are always elegant.

Miss Patty expatiated on the divine Mortimer Montgomery Mornington, after being shot in a duel, lying gracefully on a sofa, calmly kissing the hand of the weeping Monimia.

"And where were the bandages, and the blood, and the surgeon, and the splinters, and the ointments, and the instruments,

ments, and the roaring, and the wry faces?" asked the astonished Jack, for he had witnessed the consequences of a real duel.

"Vulgar stuff!" answered Miss Patty.

"Vulgar or not, I only know Joe Tomkins——"

He was interrupted.—Joe Tomkins! the name was an *antidote* to all elegance!

CHAPTER XIII.

Talking and Conversation.

When Mrs. Mary's invalid and Mrs. Egerton's children would allow these two ladies to meet, which indeed was generally in the sick chamber of the one, or the nursery of the other, it was surprising in what a stupid manner they passed their time. Instead of the *piquante* relish of satirical wit, or pungent criticism, to season their conversation, they dealt only in mild fla-

vourings—the milk of human kindness predominated in their discourse, rather than the acid of wit.

Now, when Miss Wronghead and her aunt sat down to talk, they so charmingly recapitulated all the faults of all their neighbours, and being perfect themselves, could with safe consciences condemn their guilty friends, it was highly edifying to hear their strictures, highly animating to mark their sneer at small errors—their loud laugh at greater sins.

Lady Ruthven suffered sadly on such occasions, for though both the ladies kindly attended her routs, danced at her balls, and ate her dinners, they nevertheless, with quick delicacy, felt all her frailties, and with lively generosity published them.

Mrs. Mary, if she named the countess, did so with a sigh; but it was an ignoble sigh of pity; and when she exclaimed—"Poor, lost creature!" it seemed as if the genius of reprobation had fled, and compassion alone remained. She sought to lessen,

lessen, not heighten, the charm of criminality, and more than once ran the risk of having the purity of her own character called in question, by offering palliatives for the degraded lady Ruthven.

Not so Miss Patty: her praiseworthy zeal in the cause of virtue urged her to disown all pity for offences—pure and spotless herself, it would have tarnished* her fair fame to have extenuated guilt; to forgive was incompatible with her rigid morality—to forget was all she could occasionally accomplish; and she made a point of only remembering the lady's errors, when, for the instruction of her fellow-creatures, she could delineate and reprobate those errors in the social circle. Miss Patty, besides the faults of her friends, had another delightful source of talking—the

* We hope that none of our readers will recollect that the most precious metals are least liable to tarnish, and thence draw awkward comparisons between the untarnishable gold of Mrs Mary's reputation, and the tarnishable copper of Miss Patty's.

the repetition of all that had been said, and done, and looked, in one party, to the next *coterie* she honoured with her presence. This breach of confidence (as it may be called, for want of another* name) sometimes produced odd effects, causing dissensions, and altercations, and discussions—messages, calls, remonstrances, and explanations—menaces and apologies. Now all this impulse to feeling, and acting, and speaking, being given by Miss Patty, the community were much indebted to her for preserving them from the dull monotony of tranquillity and concord. Sometimes, to be sure, kind friends were hereby transformed into rancorous enemies—intimate associates converted into sarcastic censors—the sweet union of circles was snapt asunder, and the flame of discord took place of the glow of kindness. But these were trivial consequences, that did not check Miss Patty's energy in the labour of retailing; and besides, she could shew her "sceptibility,"

* Reader, it can have no other.

bility," by lamenting the very evils she herself had caused.

Mr. Knowlesdon once made a very cruel remark in the hearing of the spinster.—"That it should be a law in society, that whoever infringed its peace, by mischievous repetition, should be declared an outlaw from the circle thus injured, and be shunned accordingly by all its members."

Mr. Knowlesdon also always called Miss Patty the thermometer of society, for he vowed he could always tell the degree of warmth, *alias* the degree of wealth, of the person she addressed. And here the lady doubtless displayed exquisite susceptibility, for she knew accurately how to lower her curtsey, as the individual increased in opulence, as also how to rise her head, as the individual sank into poverty—rich and poor were the internal causes that produced the hot and cold of her thermometer, subject also to the same rapid variations from the extreme of one to the extreme of the other; for as report gave a legacy or a lottery

a lottery ticket, the lady warmed to more than blood-heat; and bad debts, and a lost suit, sunk her to the freezing point. Her susceptible nicety had another peculiarity —she could distinguish the rank as well as the fortune of her acquaintance. The poor Miss Jackson could scarcely get a nod, but when the lady was found to be niece to the sixteenth cousin of a duke's uncle, Miss Patty had smiles, nods, and curtsies in abundance for the dame. Sally Smith, the farmer's daughter, had many faults; but when Sally became the wife of the city knight, Miss Patty was continually applauding the numerous virtues and accomplishments of "that dear creature, lady Sarah Gubbins."

Of all these elegances, Mrs. Egerton was totally destitute. She and Mrs. Mary would sit for hours together, without once calling in the aid of criticism to enliven their chat—nay, we have heard it said, but we do not believe it, that the only frailties they condemned were their own—the only

omissions

omissions they regretted were those of which themselves had been guilty.

We will give our readers a specimen.—"I have been sadly negligent," began Mrs. Knowlesdon; "I promised my brother to call upon lady Ruthven, and have forgotten to do so—I am quite vexed with myself."

"She did a very charitable action the other day," said Mrs. Egerton.

Now here was a fine opportunity for Mrs. Mary to have sarcastically replied—"Ay, charity hideth a multitude of sins;" but, stupid woman! she only replied—"I was glad to hear of it: charity may be deemed the precursor of almost every other virtue, of humility most especially; and when the spirit is humbled, what good may not ensue!"

"Miss Wronghead also," observed Mrs. Egerton, "has employed herself in making tasteful articles, to be sold for the benefit of the poor. Young people cannot more amiably exert their talents, or more beneficially occupy their leisure."

It

It was unlucky that Susan was not with her aunt, or what piquante speeches she would have uttered on the occasion!—"La! ma'am, any thing but tasteful, I think;" and "Charity, indeed! I am sure she only thought of shewing off her painting."

Witless Mrs. Mary simply assented to the remark, and the subject was dropped; how much to the loss of our readers, they can but feebly imagine—for Mrs. Egerton could have subjoined some delicious particulars, such as the contempt with which Miss Clementina mentioned Susan Knowlesdon—the sarcasm of Miss Patty on the delicate complexion of Mrs. Mary, which she was pleased to denominate sickly and "*granivorous*"—the haughty censure of lady Wronghead, on the affected kindness of Mrs. Knowlesdon to Rachael, and fifty other such soothing remarks, that met Mrs. Egerton's ear, during her last morning call at Random Hall; she also could have detailed a pretty smart altercation betwixt the gentle Clemy and her mamma, on the propriety

propriety of walking, arm in arm, with bachelor strangers, lady Wronghead ignorantly supposing the act was uncommon, or prudishly fancying it was indecorous.

If Mrs. Egerton, therefore, had not been the dullest mortal in the world, she would have given a most delectable account of the whole scene; and, even without the *allowable* exaggerations suggested by genius, could have amused Mrs. Mary for many hours—she could have warmed her to anger, and then cooled her down to contempt, and left her to meet her relatives under the influence of those newly-roused passions. Then, for an *ad libitum* flourish, she could have described how red Miss Clemy turned, and how blue her mamma looked—how the first bit her lips till they bled, and how the last cried her eyes out of her head.—Now, though Mrs. Mary, as well as our readers, would have opined that not a quarter of the account was true, yet how much it would have amused her! and how high would Mrs. Egerton's powers of invention

vention and entertainment have risen in her estimation! The more she embellished, the more she proved her ingenuity; and as wit is *justly* prized above virtue, how great would have been her share of applause!

The sacrifice of truth is an insignificant flaw in such details, and had poor Mrs. Egerton been so spirited as to make the sacrifice, if only in this instance, we should have been furnished with at least twenty full pages of unadulterated, genuine good *talking;* as it was, we could not get out of the tame jog-trot of sober conversation, Mrs. Egerton pertinaciously adhering to the bare fact, and, worse than all, to the least desirable part of the fact, to wit, the amiable occupation of Miss Wronghead.

We have no other apology to offer for this digression than the laudable wish of informing our readers what might have been said, and what ought to have been said, and what, perhaps, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, would have been said—at the same time, to demonstrate how well

versed

versed we are in the subject.—" It had been so with us, had we been there."

We feel somewhat ashamed to repeat the low-lived dialogue that ensued, but we have promised to give a fair specimen of the *tête-à-tête* of these ladies.—" A widow, sick, in the midst of half-a-dozen ragged brats," with a corner tied in Mrs. Mary's handkerchief, as a memorandum to send clothes and money to the same, as if such things could not be remembered without such a memento. It might be argued, that when of rare occurrence, such intentions are recollected from their singularity; and as ladies of fashion are obliged to record their multitudinous engagements to routs and plays, so ladies of no fashion are compelled to register their less elegant avocations, lest their multiplicity should induce omission.

To be sure, genteel people, when they perform acts of bounty, set about them in a very above-board manner; not silently passing down narrow lanes and dirty allies, shedding

shedding their benefactions as they go, like the noiseless dews of heaven, nourishing the parched soil, and "deny to misery nothing—but their name," but frankly and openly announce to all the world their generosity, their pity, and their activity—Nay, some are so very nice in this particular, that they will not give at all, unless it is to be so announced; and others, again, prefer giving their name to giving their benefaction!

But to proceed—"How angry I am with myself!" exclaimed Mrs. Egerton, as the knot in Mrs. Mary's handkerchief awoke a train of associations in her mind: "This very day I was to have ordered the dirty garret, No. 3, Back-lane, to have been white-washed, now the wretched family inhabiting it are recovered from their dreadful fever."

This business required no memento, for though it might with great propriety have been postponed, as its execution involved a matter of no consequence—namely, the comfort

comfort of a miserable group, yet Mrs. Egerton, at the heavy price of rising from her chair, actually did ring the bell.

The maid appeared.

"Pray Hannah, run to the white-washer, Mr. Hill, and ask him to come here as soon as he can."

Away went Hannah, not, however, before her mistress had desired her to take the umbrella, as a heavy shower portended. How ridiculous! as if a servant could suffer from cold and dampness!

After arriving at this scene of coarse ideas and paltry subjects, it might be supposed these two ladies had incapacitated themselves for refined discourse; but, by some strange substitution of causes for effects, what would have vulgarized any other person seemed to act upon diametrically opposite principles with our two talkers. Affected writers might here risk their crude suggestions, on the probability that the consciousness of benevolent intentions and benevolent actions has a refining

a refining power, and whilst ameliorating, or rather exhilarating the heart, like an effervescent liquor, mounts into the head, and plays tricks there.

However this may be, certain it is that Hannah had scarcely shut the door, than, as if because things were done, there was no further need to talk about them, no further occasion for whys and wherefores, doubts and surmises, Mrs. Egerton, reseating herself, asked Mrs. Mary if she had yet read Guiccardini, and what she thought of his history?

Mrs. Mary, undismayed by this unexpected address, this change of subject from heart to mind, calmly gave her opinion, and in her turn asked Mrs. Egerton's judgment of the Classical Tour of Mrs. Eustace.

The sentiments of both parties were favourable to both authors—Some people are so easily pleased!

The conversation now became perfectly unfashionable, and as perfectly unintelligible. Besides a few remarks on the changes

changes of empires and states, very unfeminine, and quite out of character, there were many rapturous exclamations on a piece of Spanish, or Dutch, or Italian poetry, entitled—"*Il Pastor Fido*," by one Guorini, and we heard Mrs. Egerton spout something about

"O! prima vera! gioventu del' anno!
Bella madre de fiori," *

a couplet Mrs. Mary smilingly declared much in character with the speaker, Mrs. Egerton being just that moment fondling two of the four rosy children that had been playing in the room during the whole conversation.

Dinner-time put an end to this curious *tête-à-tête;* and as eating together was not necessary to the cementing of the friendship of these ladies, Mrs. Mary returned to her invalid; and Mrs. Egerton, sending her children to their nursery, dressed to receive her husband.

* Oh Spring! youth of the year!
Beautiful mother of flowers!

CHAPTER XIV.

A very learned Chapter.

The very next time that Mrs. Egerton rambled with her children to Woodleigh Manor, she found the solicitor in wrathful mood, and Susan prettily pouting.

The lady's crime was soon explained: she had been these three days crying herself sick over the sorrows of some fictitious *elegante*, and allowed a poor woman in the village to starve from neglect.

"She did not know of her distress."

"Pardon me, she knew it well, and also knew that as her aunt was peculiarly engaged with Rachael, she must herself direct the necessary relief."

"I am sure, my friend Susan is not deficient in feeling," said Mrs. Egerton, continuing her advocation.

"She

"She has a superabundance of sensibility," replied the solicitor, with an ironical expression; "witness these swollen eyes, these pallid cheeks: but sensibility in the modern vocabulary, I fancy, is a term very distinct in its meaning from feeling; sensibility is an exquisite emotion, expressing itself in tears and sighs, and every external sign of grief—feeling, a secret but active principle, without many sighs or tears, moving directly to its mark, the amelioration of sorrow. Shall I call one the passive and the other the active form of emotion?"

"I was very sorry for the woman," said Susan; "and fully intended to relieve her."

"And why did you not, child—why did you not?"

"I entirely forgot it, sir."

"And how came you to forget it?"

Susan blushed.

"The truth is," said Mrs. Mary, "that her thoughts have been absorbed in this foolish novel."

"Were there no other reason, this one is sufficient to mark the pernicious effects of such works engrossing the mind, and leading it to neglect its positive duties."

The solicitor drew tears into the eyes of his niece.

"Oh, Susan!" exclaimed Mrs. Mary; "you weep over these tales of fancy. Be assured, my dear child, this precious sense of sympathy was given you for nobler purposes than thus to be expended on fictitious woes: it was given to draw you to your fellow-creatures, to sooth the griefs of the afflicted, and participate the joys of the fortunate; it was given to hold man to man in the sweet bands of fellow-feeling."

"You shall never read another novel whilst under my roof," said the angry solicitor.

Susan looked as much dismayed as if her uncle had sworn to deny her food and clothing—"Never read, uncle!"

"Oh yes, child, read as much as you like—read Rollin's Ancient History, Hume's England,

England, Blair's Lectures, Robertson's Charles V——"

Mr. Knowlesdon was proceeding, but Mrs. Mary began her list—"Or Gisborne's Duties of Women, Mrs. Chapone's Letters, Seneca's Morals, Paley's Theology, Beattie's Evidences, Porteus's Lectures."

Poor alarmed Susan! she fairly gasped for breath.

Mrs. Egerton with difficulty restrained a smile at the appalling catalogue.—"We must not attempt too violent a transition, my good friends," said she, in an imploring tone; "the mental as well as the physical taste must be sometimes humoured."

"Ay, when diseased," said the solicitor.

"Well, I will allow that is the case with Susan just now; her literary palate is at present enervated by luxurious diet, and consequently incapable of enjoying the simple and substantial fare you recommend. Those who have been eating sweetmeats cannot at once relish plain bread."

"You are right," answered Mr. Knowles-

don, "and are proving the benefits oft-times conferred by female gentleness, in softening the harsh decrees of manly wisdom. *My* severity would have defeated the rational scheme *your* milder sentiments have rendered efficacious."

Mrs. Egerton continued her remarks, as if this praise was bestowed on her sex generally, not on herself particularly—"We must gradually raise the taste, or if you please, Susan, *lower* the taste, to the standard of reason, before we recommend rational reading."

"Woman! thou wert born to temper man—we had been brutes without you," exclaimed the solicitor.

"Will you allow me to recommend a book to you, Susan?"

Susan joyfully complied.

"Have you ever read the Vicar of Wakefield?"

"No, ma'am, but I have read the six volumes of Cartemisia, or the Innocent Crime; the four volumes of Roderigo, or the

the Amiable Suicide; the five volumes of Marlow, or the Graceful Duellist; the seven——"

"Oh stop! for-pity's sake stop!" said Mrs. Knowlesdon; "why, child, you must be prepared to advocate every amiable sin, and every innocent sinner, that adorn the world."

Mr. Knowlesdon now began a very active search for all the novels the house sheltered. He peeped behind every sofa-pillow, and upturned every chair-cushion; table-drawers were compelled to yield up their long-collected treasures, and work-boxes were ransacked. The well-thumbed heap thus amassed, he had inevitably exterminated by fire and faggot, had not Mrs. Mary prevented the threatened conflagration, by suggesting that the articles were not his own. Mr. Knowlesdon was ready to exclaim, that possession is nine-tenths of the law, and that he could be justified in destroying so much mental poison. But as he had not arrived at that disdain of old-fashioned maxims, as to use his neighbour's property as if it was his own, he marched

to the librarian's, attended by a servant carrying the well-filled basket. There, after a thundering philippic against the trash he delivered, he paid the astonished shopkeeper, and more calmly strode home again.

But in returning the volumes, an unforeseen event again menaced Susan's tranquillity: one of the books, in being passed from the basket to the counter, let fall a paper, inscribed with Susan's handwriting. The eagle eyes of the solicitor instantly recognized it, and in muttering tones he read aloud the following—

"*SONNET TO MEMORY.*

"Hail, Memory! hail! thy tablet of the past,
Marked with my former joys, my former fears,
Hope's faithless smiles, misfortune's tears,
Love's chequered throbs, and disappointment's blast!
The various recollected scenes of youth
Rise on thy page: alas! how dim a shade
Curtains the whole! Before thy pencil fade
My present joys! Stern record of the truth,

Thou

Thou bidd'st each past regretted scene return—
Return upon my heart with added power,
Chace all my smiles, and teach me but to mourn;
For in the retrospect of life's fair day,
First smiles a cloudless dawn—soon tempests lower;
Till now amid the wreck of life I stray."

Mr. Knowlesdon put the precious paper into his pocket, and on his way home began considering what could have given rise to this pathetic composition—whether the "misfortune's tears, and disappointment's blast" had strained poor Susan's mental tablet, because she had the misfortune to lose her fan, or the disappointment of a new bonnet not made to her order; as for "hope's faithless smiles," he adjudged them to a promised ball not yet enjoyed, and "love's chequered throbs" he wisely appropriated to the service of the several heroes and heroines, for whom Susan had lately been suffering so much.

Luckily for the young lady, she had proceeded to the sick woman's, and was not at home when her uncle returned, or

she might have heard the sonnet, with no very flattering comments subjoined. But her ready obedience softened the critic's ire, and for her exerted virtue she was pardoned her deficiency of genius.

Susan read the Vicar of Wakefield with that delight it must ever confer, and was so charmed with the natural and pithy style of the author, that she entreated Mrs. Egerton to lend her some other book by the same hand. The Traveller, and the Deserted Village, were given to her. Susan's appetite increased by what it fed on—again she applied to Mrs. Egerton.

"I have no other entertaining works of Goldsmith's to introduce to your acquaintance—He has written a History of England, but that, I fear, will not amuse you."

Susan desired to make the experiment, and soon found herself interested beyond her expectation. The virtues of real heroes warmed her heart with a less fugitive glow, and some of the heroines beguiled her of her tears. When charmed with the valour

lour and the modesty of an Edward, she felt how high the human character could be elevated; and when she wept over the sorrows of the virtuous Anne Bullen, and the venerable and dignified Stafford, she could have almost believed, as well as wished, that she was perusing the pathetic narrative of romance.

Her taste insensibly and gradually refined: after regaling on the page of a Robertson, or a Johnson, she ceased to relish the common trash of circulating libraries. A good novel was always acceptable, and gave a pleasant change to her studies; but she could not, as before, devour all the garbage of folly and immorality. She thought more, and fancied less; true history exercises the reason—romance yields sustenance to the imagination alone; we can only *reason* upon facts.

CHAPTER XV.

Generosity defined.

Mr. Knowlesdon loved his profession most when its institutes could serve the cause of virtue and social harmony. By some judicious hints to lord Ruthven's agent and lord Rochford's steward, he persuaded those gentlemen for once to arrange the debts of their several employers; and James Twist, invested with his rightful dues, again cheerfully pursued his humble but useful course.

The solicitor, eager to inform his sister of his successful performance of her commission, and seeing her with Mrs. Egerton purchasing muslin at a little *soi-disante* milliner's in the village, followed them into the shop to communicate the welcome and unexpected news. He found a numerous group

group of ladies assembled in the gaily-adorned apartment, surveying a box of laces and ribbons, shortly to be raffled for.

"This lace scarf will so exactly suit your helegant figure, me'em," said the milliner to Miss Muddleton.

The lady smiled a gracious assent, and put down her two guineas.

"Such a lace will just become a person of your rank, my lady."

Lady Wronghead produced the golden coin.

"Please, Miss Wronghead, to look at this veil—I am much mistaken, me'em, if it would not vastly become your beautiful complexion, me'em."

Miss Wronghead was very willing to make the experiment, and sweetly replied —"Put down my name."

"Mrs. Egerton, me'em, may I have the honour? the lace is not English, upon my honour, me'em."

"Oh, every body of course will subscribe," said Miss Clementina.

"Not

"Not me, certainly," replied Mrs. Egerton, smiling; "I cannot afford it."

The reason was more ridiculous than the resolution; in short, the party did not consider it as a reason, but they stared at the excuse—it was certainly novel, and not the less so for being probably true.

"Not afford two guineas, yet wear this superb Brussels veil!" at length murmured Miss Patty Muddleton.

The solicitor's eyes did not elicit flames—of love, at what he chose to denominate *a malicious sneer*.

Mrs. Egerton gaily replied—"This veil is indeed almost too splendid for me, but I wear it because it was the gift of my father."

She spoke, unconscious of the speculations her words produced; for, who could be her father, to bestow such a present? popped into every head but her own. If she had announced that she never had a father, she could not more powerfully have affected the circle.

The

The milliner, as if acquainted with the sturdy firmness of the spiritless Helena, urged her no farther; and Mrs. Knowlesdon having expressed her denial by an eloquent shake of her head, she also being deemed invulnerable, was excused all entreaty. But Mrs. Mansel, the giddy extravagant wife of a portionless younger brother, was yet to be assailed.

"I can assure you, me'em, no person of quality is without such a suit of lace."

The solicitor whispered Mrs. Egerton, that he was convinced the most skilful of his brother-pleaders could not more adroitly have managed the foibles and the passions of his hearers.

Mrs. Mansel rose to pay a sum she could ill spare to risk on trifles, but the negation of Mrs. Egerton yet sounded in her ears—"I cannot afford it." She felt it was precisely her own case—she sat down again, and declined contributing to the subscription. Though Mrs. Mansel pronounced this determination with the confusion of a criminal,

criminal, a sense of right gradually stole into her heart, and stilled her fluttering nerves; she ventured to look up, and was cheered by the approving glance of the solicitor, and the encouraging smiles of his two female friends.

But she had to withstand the scorn of Miss Clementina, the surprise of lady Wronghead, and the sarcastic sneer of the tender maiden, Miss Patty Muddleton, who, secretly arranging the postponement of Twist's payment, moved her two guineas across the counter, audibly whispering—"But I can afford it."

May we for once be dully grave, and suggest, that if people cannot or will not give good advice, and good examples, they surely can refrain from destroying the good effect of the example and precept of others. But courage, Mrs. Mansel! you have won a glorious victory, greater than ever was achieved in the embattled field—a conquest over yourself, and you shall not miss your well-earned fame.

The

The attention of the company was at this moment attracted by a loud cry, which, upon inquiry, proved to be master Sammy Wronghead in a passion, because Frank Egerton would not resign to him a whip he desired.

The mothers interfered.—"Give it up, Sam, my dear, like a little gentleman—it is so vulgar to be rude; and when children behave prettily, every body admires them. A gentleman is never in a passion." Such was the coaxing interposition of lady Wronghead.

"My dear Frank, oblige your little playfellow; we ought always to be as kind as we can—'Do as you would be done by,' Frank," said Mrs. Egerton.

Frank's hand yielded the firmly grasped stick, for he understood and felt his mother's reasoning.

Master Sammy was too angry at that moment to find the stimulus of praise a compensation for self-denial; he also knew that gentlemen were often in a passion—

to

to wit, his father, brother, and uncle. If his mother spoke false on this point, she might have spoken false in all—people did not admire pretty-behaved children; he was determined not to be pretty-behaved, but to be a gentleman, so ran off with the extricated stick.

Those unaccustomed to watch the movements of children are not aware how often such trains of reasoning determine their actions—how often the false premises of the instructor lead to the false conclusions of the pupil.

"So different are the precepts of fashion and of morality—so much at variance are the motives of the Christian and the man of the world. But, 'as the twig is bent the tree's inclined' — we inculcate gentility, and must not expect to produce morality," murmured Mr. Knowlesdon.

Miss Patty caught his words, and immediately commenced a very scientific discourse upon education. She managed the subject in the favourite and attractive mode

of

of proving what is right, by pointing out what is wrong.—" Lady Wronghead did so spoil the children, dear little things! though I am sure I *shall* never love my own better." Here was a sigh and a tell-tale glance, which, however, were both lost upon the obdurate solicitor. The lady resumed—" No, I *shall* not love my own better; but I must say, they are sadly mismanaged—running and jumping about, without any regard to order, dirtying their clothes, and eating like ploughboys. I cannot bear such things—I do love orderly children, that behave with propriety, and are well educated, hold up their heads, keep their clothes neat and clean, and eat their victuals in a genteel manner."

Miss Patty delivered this pretty piece of oratory with the air of a philosopher, and though Mr. Knowlesdon took no manner of notice of it, we record it in our page, as a compendium of *good education*, for the edification of all those whom it may concern.

Mrs.

Mrs. Egerton now retired with her smiling boy.

"What an odd woman!"—"How monstrous stingy!"—"How vastly mean!" were the several epithets conferred upon her.

"Do not say so—do not think so!" exclaimed Susan, in a burst of enthusiasm; "Mrs. Egerton is the most liberal, the most disinterested of women."

"Assertion is no proof," replied the wary solicitor; "give us evidence, give us facts, Susan."

"The poor shopkeeper, uncle."

"Well, child, what has that to do with Mrs. Egerton? What is there in common between the distress of the one and the virtue of the other?"

"Remember what she gave them."

"A couple of shillings, perhaps?" said Miss Muddleton.

"A couple of guineas, madam," answered Susan, proudly; "and would have done more, but——"

"But

"But she could not afford it," interposed Miss Muddleton.

"True, madam," retorted Susan; "and for this reason she prefers honesty to generosity."

"Or rather say, the one cannot exist without the other," said Mr. Knowlesdon.

Miss Patty *purtested* she did not understand these speeches, with that pretty air of juvenile ignorance, sometimes assumed by maidens of fifty, when aping the artless airs of maidens of fifteen.

"I fancy, madam," continued Mr. Knowlesdon, "my niece means, that the lady she has the honour to advocate attends to the claims of justice before those of liberality, that she honestly pays her debts before she generously gives *even a shilling*, and that when she makes a promise she performs it."

Miss Patty Muddleton followed her inquiries no farther, but even looked with ineffable sweetness upon the unmerciful lawyer,

lawyer, as he added—"There is no such thing as generosity without justice."

We do think that, without any exception, Mr. Solicitor Knowlesdon was the most ill-bred, rude, cross-grained bachelor in the British empire.

CHAPTER XVI.

Bachelor's Wives.

Miss Patty Muddleton walked home, deeply meditating on the words of the solicitor. She had long desired to accurately inform herself what was the kind of woman this gentleman could be prevailed upon to make Mrs. Knowlesdon—not perhaps without more than faint hopes that the materials might be found in Miss Patty Muddleton; and then, how easy to bring them into action and observation!

Whether

Whether it was with continually reading Milton's description of Eve (that wife of obsolete fashion), or the frequent perusal of the last chapter of Proverbs, which delineates that odd antediluvian personage, "a virtuous woman," we know not, but assuredly Mr. Knowlesdon had very Gothic ideas of the lovely sex, and such as he could never expect to see realized.

Miss Patty was aware of all this, and was willing not only to convince the silly man of the impossibility of his *beau ideal* being realized, but also that, all things considered, she was herself as near the mark as could be found in these degenerate days.

Opportunities are never sedulously sought without being found. We may have made this remark before, and we may make it again, for it is one we very earnestly desire to enforce, and must therefore be forgiven if we introduce it on every appropriate occasion.

Mr. Knowlesdon attended lady Wronghead to the Hall that very day, and dined there

there at her request. During dinner sir Gabriel thanked his lady for making some alterations in her household, according to his suggestion. We do not say that it was owing to the singularity of the acquiescence that the gentleman felt so particularly grateful, for our business just now is to record the speech thereby induced from the lawyer, who, with the energy of a poet, exclaimed—

"Nothing lovelier can be found
In woman, than to study household good."

This was exactly the opening Miss Patty panted for, and she therefore eagerly fixed him to the subject, by saying, with a gracious smile—"You are so fond of that Griselda, in Spencer's Fairy Queen!"

"Ma'am!" said the solicitor, looking at her with astonishment.

Miss Patty saw that astonishment was the expression of his features, and knowing it could only be astonishment at her learning, with a simper continued her display.

play.—"Griselda was certainly a charming creature."

"I was quoting from Milton, ma'am—I was speaking of Eve, ma'am," said the solicitor, recovering the use of his speech.

"And Griselda is described by Chaucer, in one of his Canterbury Tales," said sir Gabriel, slyly.

"Well, Griselda, or Eve, or Helen—all the good women of the poets are alike," said the undismayed spinster.

"Andromache, she would have said," whispered sir Gabriel in audible tones.

But Miss Patty was on other thoughts intent, and encouraged, rather than confounded, by the arch smile playing round the solicitor's mouth, calmly proceeded in her investigation of his heart—"And what part of Griselda's conduct do you most approve?"

"I disapprove the whole of it," replied Mr. Knowlesdon.

Miss Patty was confounded into a momentary pause, which being an event of

rare occurrence, Miss Wronghead gladly seized to address her uncle—"Then, I suppose, Eve is your favourite; but I hope you don't mean to say Eve is a proper model for modern ladies?"

"And why not, niece?"

"Oh! she knew nothing—absolutely nothing."

"She knew her duty, obeyed her husband, loved her children—what further knowledge need she to have possessed?"

Miss Patty was inexpressibly charmed; her trembling heart assured her she too could do all this.

"But, uncle, she had no accomplishments," exclaimed Clementina.

"A fig for accomplishments!" cried the solicitor; "they are of no use, but to make girls fantastic, and wives frivolous—Not that women often condescend to exert their accomplishments *after* they are married; that is, after accomplishments, like the cheese and bacon in a trap, have caught the prey for which they were exhibited."

Miss

Miss Patty's eyes twinkled with joy, but she suppressed her transports, and sweetly murmured—"Oh fie, Mr. Knowlesdon!"

"Accomplishments are very well in their way," said Mrs. Mary; "a feather in the cap of youth—often becoming, but never necessary."

"Oh! I have no objection to accomplishments in themselves," said the solicitor; "but I am angry when they take precedence of more useful knowledge. It is like wearing ruffles without a shirt."

Miss Patty was forced to hold a fan before her blushing cheeks, and sighed, but could not speak.

"You bachelors have such odd notions!" said lady Wronghead.

"That I allow, sister; for in our world of matrimony, our wives are humble, and our children duteous."

Lady Wronghead flung her chair back from the table, and Miss Wronghead put up her nether lip.

Miss Patty, swimming in bliss, meekly

inquired, what was Mr. Knowlesdon's idea of a good wife?

The solicitor rubbed his forehead, which made the baronet facetiously observe, he was sure his brother was thinking of matrimony; but Miss Patty leaned forwards with such an air of attention, that Mr. Knowlesdon saw he must make some reply.

"What think you of Prior's Emma, brother?" said Mrs. Mary.

"That had I been Henry, I should have heartily despised her," replied the solicitor.

"And Griselda, uncle?"

"Worse and worse, Susan. The nut-brown maid only concedes her own dignity—her own happiness; but Griselda calmly sacrifices the fame, the lives of her children, and does the very opposite to Milton's Eve—'good works in her husband to promote."

"Ah! I see Eve is your favourite—the unaccomplished Eve," said Miss Patty.

"Not unaccomplished, madam," answered

swered the solicitor, to the dismay of the spinster; "Adam calls her 'daughter of God and man, accomplished Eve."

Miss Patty was completely confounded, but the baronet, to her unspeakable relief, added—"But in those days, brother Knowlesdon, the accomplishments of women were not exactly similar to those of ladies now-a-days."

We give sir Gabriel great credit for his accurate appropriation of terms, in distinguishing *women* of old from *ladies* of modern times.

"Well, I never heard of a single accomplishment displayed by Eve," said Miss Clementina.

"Ladies may have accomplishments without *displaying* them," replied the solicitor, dryly.

Miss Patty began to revive.

The gentleman continued his remarks—"Yet I imagine the consort of Adam was not without some knowledge of the ele-

gances that embellish life, and the arts that solace it, for she not only

'—— due at her hour prepared
For dinner savoury fruits, of taste to please
True appetite, and not disrelish thirst,'

"But

'She turns, on hospitable thoughts intent,
What choice to choose for delicacy best—
What order, so contriv'd as not to mix
Tastes, not well joined, inelegant, but bring
Taste after taste, upheld with kindliest change.'

'Then strews the ground
With rose and odours from the shrub unfumed."

As the solicitor stopped to take breath, the baronet remarked the housewifely skill and industry of Eve; but Mr. Knowlesdon shortly proceeded—"Then for her taste in attire—

'———Eve
Undecked save with herself, more lovely fair
Than wood-nymph—'

'That what seem'd fair in all the world, seem'd now
Mean, or in her summ'd up, in her contain'd.'

'Grace

' Grace was in all her steps—Heav'n in her eye,
In every gesture dignity and love."

" Do you call this her dress?" asked Clementina.

" She needed no other," replied the solicitor, and eagerly continued his quotations—

' Her innocence and virgin modesty,
Her virtue, and the conscience of her worth,
That would be woo'd, and not unsought be won—
Not obvious, not obtrusive, but retired,
There more desirable ; or to say all,
Nature herself, though pure of sinful thought.'
' With looks more cheerful and serene
Than when fair morning first smiles on the world.'

" There's a catalogue of womanly adornment!" cried the solicitor.

" Of all the charming vesture," said sir Gabriel, " her virgin modesty, though most attractive, is most obsolete."

The solicitor glanced his eye on the reddening cheek of the fair Clementina, and then recurred to Eve.

" How she proves her active industry,

when she rose, and went forth among her fruits and flowers, to visit how they prospered, bud, and bloom—

'Her earliest visitation and her last.'

"Or with her husband—

'On to their morning's rural work they haste,
Among sweet dews and flowers."

"Dews!" exclaimed the baronet; "I wonder whether modern ladies know the meaning of the word?"

"Modern ladies see the dew before they sleep, and Eve when she awoke—that is all the difference," said the solicitor.

"But you say nothing of her wifely qualities, my dear sir," observed Miss Patty, with a simper.

"They were all summed up in one, ma'am—obedience."

"Oh, the rude bachelor!" thought lady Wronghead, with a frown.

"Only bachelor notions!" thought Miss Patty, with a smile.

"Ignorant uninitiated bachelor!" thought sir Gabriel, with a sigh.

The

The unconscious bachelor continued his elucidatory extracts—" Mark how prettily she tells her husband—

'What thou biddest
Unargued I obey: so God ordains;
God is thy law, thou mine; to know no more
Is woman's happiest knowledge, and her praise."

Here the solicitor made a long, and, the party thought, an awkward pause, and then pursued his repetition—

" Oh sole in whom my thoughts find all repose,
My glory, my perfection, glad I see
Thy face and morn returned.'
' Thou, therefore, now advise—
With thy permission then—
I go."

Again the solicitor was silent, and sir Gabriel, as if quite forgetful what he was, or where he was, most unseasonably and energetically subjoined—

" Oh! when meet now
Such pairs, in love and mutual honour joined?"

It was nonsense taking lady Wronghead's hands, and trying to look as if he was sorry for what he had said, or willing to believe himself a favoured exception; for contrition, in some cases and to some people, only adds to the weight of crime, and gives a better occasion of expressing it. Lady Wronghead drew away her hand with a repulsive "Pshaw!" just as the ill-judging solicitor, first admiring the gentleness of the humble-minded Eve, enthusiastically repeated—

"So cheered he his fair spouse, and—she was cheered;
But silently a gentle tear let fall
From either eye, and wiped them with her hair—
The gracious drops of sweet remorse
And pious awe, that feared to have offended.'

"Charming! charming!" exclaimed the solicitor.

Miss Patty was listening with smiling attention, happy to remember at that moment that a lady can cry whenever she pleases.

"Yet

"Yet she knows how to assert her dignity when unjustly accused," said Mr. Knowlesdon—

"To whom the virgin majesty of Eve,
As one who loves, and some unkindness meets,
With sweet austere composure thus replied—
Offspring of heaven and earth, and all earth's Lord—

His fraud is then thy fear, which plain infers
Thy equal fear, that my firm faith and love
Can by his fraud be shaken, or seduced;
Thoughts, which how found they harbour in thy breast,
Adam, misthought of her, to thee so dear?"

"A woman of no mind—no spirit," said lady Wronghead, contemptuously.

The advocate of Eve was instantly on the alert—"Nay, lady Wronghead, when she left the angel sagely conversing with her husband,

'She went not, as not with such discourse
Delighted, or not capable her ear
Of what was high; such pleasure she reserved—
Adam relating, she sole auditress,
Her husband the relator she preferred.'

" Well might Adam exclaim—

———— 'When I approach
Her loveliness, so absolute she seems,
And in herself complete, so well to know
Her own, that what she wills to do, or say,
Seems wisest, virtuousest, discreetest, best:
All higher knowledge in her presence falls
Degraded; wisdom in discourse with her
Loses discountenanced, and like folly shews;
Authority and reason on her wait,
As one intended first, not after made
Occasionally; and to consummate all,
Greatness of mind, and nobleness, their seat
Build in her loveliest, and create an awe
About her, as a guard angelic placed."

" You will never be married," said sir Gabriel—a remark that darkened lady Wronghead's frown, and banished Miss Patty's smile.

CHAP.

CHAPTER XVII.

Ancient Maxims, and Modish Comments.

An increased attack of her disorder had rendered Mrs. Rachael Wronghead more than usually exacting of Mrs. Mary's time and patience. Many were the days and nights that lady had spent without remission in the sick chamber—yet more numerous the petulant and irritating remonstrances she had endured, not only with unreplying gentleness, but returned with undeviating kindness—But the world knew nothing of all this! the busy world, that was perhaps at those very moments satirizing the seclusion-loving old maid—ridiculing as stinginess the selfish economy that enabled her to humour the expensive whims of capricious appetite—scorning as dull the meekness that resigned all selfish pleasure,

pleasure, to administer comfort to repining waywardness. But Mrs. Mary was contented to endure such opprobrium in silent forbearance—she awaited her fiat from a higher tribunal.

Mrs. Egerton devoted all her leisure to sharing and ameliorating the confinement and the cares of her friend. With one of her children she daily visited the sick-room, and only left it when the wishes of her husband, or the claims of her nursery, required her presence at the abbey.

It was unfortunate, that at such a time the family at the Hall could not spare a moment for the invalid. Lady Wronghead, indeed, when she *chanced* to ride that way, generally stopped her carriage to make her hurried inquiries, and sometimes more hurried visit; and we believe did once condescend to convey some fine grapes to poor sister Rachael, at the request of sir Gabriel; but she found the sight and the smell of the luxuriant basket so much too powerful for her delicate senses, that she vowed

she

she would never admit such another package into her chariot.

The fevered lips of the sufferer must therefore have remained unmoistened by the grateful fruit, had not sir Gabriel's kindness discovered other means of forwarding to her the best produce of his hothouse. But he said nothing of this arrangement to his tender spouse, nor did he make a remark when he saw her, within a week after her late vow, stow a melon and two pine-apples into the front pocket of her carriage, as a present to the longing lady Ruthven.

Jack would certainly have drawn some awkward comparisons, as he handed his mother and her load into the vehicle, but sir Gabriel caught the laughing quizzing glance of his eye, and, with an authority he seldom exerted, commanded his silence—for sir Gabriel never willingly caused pain to any human being.

Jack bowed acquiescence, but the moment he was alone with his father, exclaimed

claimed—"My dear sir, it is all very right; you do good for the sake of benefiting others—my mother for the purpose of aggrandizing herself. Every body will see and hear of lady Ruthven's pines and melon—nobody will either see or hear of aunt Rachael's grapes but her insignificant self."

Miss Patty also had found it inconvenient to call of late at Woodleigh Manor. This was the more remarkable, as she was pretty regular in her visits upon Mrs. Mary, when she and her brother sat together in their front parlour, and would even express abundance of *sceptibility* for dear Rachael's dreadful state, and even once, in a way, run up stairs with the lightness of a sylph to Rachael's chamber, to——look at herself in the glass, arrange her curls, her cap, and her pelisse—remind Mrs. Rachael how many kind friends she possessed, how much *she had to be thankful for*, and then run down stairs again.

Reader, the solicitor had been from home. We do not often expose the secrets of our friends,

friends, but we thought it right to do so here, to save our favourite, the amiable Miss Patty, from the charge of caprice.—Can all who peruse these pages lay their hands on their hearts, and declare, they have only betrayed confidence from as upright motives?

Mrs. Rachael was usually more harassed than consoled by the pop visits of Miss Muddleton—she seemed to think it rather cruel to be told "how much she had to be thankful for," whilst stretched on her bed, racked by convulsion, every sense dimmed, and every limb contracted; but as some people may agree with her in opinion, we will not risk censure, by contradicting the propriety of her sentiments.

Adam Wronghead, Esq. had heard of Mrs. Egerton's daily visits to his sick aunt, and always contrived to encounter her in some attractive costume: at one time he might have been mistaken for his groom, in his long frock, coloured neckcloth, and loose pantaloons, and in truth his manners

then

then best accorded with his garb; at another time, he might have been deemed the dancing-master of the village, in his spruce coat, delicate silk stockings, and low-cut shoes; here indeed his mien suited not so exactly with his dress, but in either case it might be pretty safely announced that he looked like any thing but a—gentleman.

If the darling scheme of this accomplished youth in gaining the heart of Helena is remembered, it will be quickly divined that these meetings were not accidental. In sooth, the beau sought by every contrivance art could devise, by every blandishment flattery could suggest, to win that easy prey—a woman's heart. He sighed or smiled, as she looked grave or gay—moulded his movements to every graceful attitude, modulated his voice to every varied feeling—talked of domestic happiness with rapture, deprecated the forms of society with asperity, and sometimes ventured to hint the delights of love returned. How he managed it we know not, but he evidently

ly rather lost than gained ground by his assiduities, and had the misery to find most of his best speeches misconstrued. There was a calm sobriety in the manner, a steady good sense in the language, an intelligent expression in the eye of Mrs. Egerton, that baffled all his effrontery—and really, to do him justice, Adam Wronghead, Esq. had no small share of this quality. In short, at the end of a few weeks, the gentleman was compelled to beat a retreat, to rescue himself from the disgrace of capitulation; instead of being the conqueror, he found himself the conquered—instead of having to boast his power, he had to feel her mercy—instead of gaining her heart, he found he had lost his own. It was ever afterwards amusing to see the discomfited beau, in the presence of the woman whose light love he had so confidently anticipated to gain—his eye sinking beneath her calm glance, his cheek reddening at her slightest comment. Nor could he boast the cold comfort of having for a moment disturbed the

the lady's domestic tranquillity, or shaken the confidence of her husband: Montague Egerton would have as easily been jealous of the butterflies that fluttered around his Helena.

Mrs. Egerton is no favourite of ours, as may be readily supposed, her tame virtues being more calculated to embellish the spiritless scenes of domestic life than to gild the pages of a novel. She did nothing worthy publicity—nothing that could be talked of; her favourite motto was, "That privacy is the sphere of woman."

Her conduct, therefore, towards Adam Wronghead, Esq. we can neither applaud nor justify; for what harm can possibly arise from a wife giving gracious encouragement to the innocent familiarities of her bachelor acquaintance—lolling on the arm of one, and striking another with her fan—looking grave when no harm is intended, to shew she was thinking of what might have been intended, and laughing at palpable rudeness, to prove her forgiving good-

nature,

nature, with a laudable disdain of the maxim ascribed to Cæsar—"It is not enough for a woman to be virtuous—she must also appear so?"

We can only recollect two *rather* disagreeable consequences likely to ensue from such pretty trifling: first, the chance of giving pain to a husband—and what woman of spirit cares for that? Nay, if the silly man chooses to be jealous, this is the best mode of curing him; for since jealousy cannot exist without love, the deuce is in it, if by destroying his love he will not also be cured of his jealousy. Secondly, the general opinion that the most abandoned profligate will not presume to violate a female's delicacy, by a look, a word, an act, of undue freedom, if that female does not, by the beforementioned levity, give licence and encouragement to his folly. Hence such pretty trifling is deemed too often the precursor of deeper error; the woman who begins with excusing levity too often finishes by participating guilt.—

Perhaps it is as well for her to avoid both these chances—the risk of her husband's peace and attachment—of her own virtue and happiness!

CHAPTER XVIII.

Pride and Dignity.

In one of Mrs. Egerton's visits to Mrs. Mary Knowlesdon, she became acquainted with a new character. Mrs. Barbara Maude was an elderly maiden of humble rank, and still humbler fortune; the small-pox had not only deeply scarred her face, but destroyed the sight of one of her eyes; the rheumatism (caught by plunging into a stream to save a cottager's drowning child) had fixed in her left knee, and rendered her movements slow and awkward. Her small fortune was made yet smaller by the perfidy of the supposed friend to whom it was

was confided. Her health had been severely injured by a long attendance on a sick brother, who at length had died in her arms, and left two pennyless orphans, solely dependent on her benevolence. Thus nature and fortune had conspired to afflict and oppress her; yet, with unaccountable perversity, this old woman would be happy and cheerful amidst adversity, would be respectable amidst poverty and insignificance.

The increased illness of Mrs. Rachael, and the consequent more rigid confinement of Mrs. Mary, were sufficient reasons to bring this compassionate mortal to the sick chamber; enlivening them, not with delicious tales of double-distilled and double-retailed scandal, and anecdotes of egotism—" how ill *she* behaved—how rudely *he* spoke—how kindly *I* acted—how calmly I interfered;" but with cheering details of poverty relieved, of prosperity enjoyed—who was kind—who was generous—who was humble.

Mrs.

Mrs. Egerton of course* expected little merit beneath so much deformity and vulgarity, and was disposed to turn with disgust from the decrepid mortal, perched on a chair much too high for her dangling feet —she anticipated little candour from the sharp features, rapid enunciation, and low-bred air of the stranger, but had soon cause to blush for her premature judgment, and listened with admiration and respect to sentiments equally the expression of sense and feeling.

Reader, "it is not all gold that glitters," —the most precious diamonds are found encrusted with a coarse and unlovely covering.

As soon as Mrs. Barbara saw that her friends were enlivened with more agreeable society, she arose to depart—"I will go home—I can be of no further use."

"Then now stay for our pleasure," said Mrs. Mary, with kind earnestness.

"Pleasure! I only pretend to give help, and

* And why of course?

and leave pleasure to be conferred by the young, the gay, the lovely." She smiled in perfect good-humour as her eye glanced towards Mrs. Egerton.

"You have forgotten," replied Helena, "to add to youth, beauty, and gaiety, the only quality that can give those charms, imposing as they are, the power to please."

"What have I forgotten?" asked Mrs. Barbara.

"Good temper," said Mrs. Egerton, emphatically; "without which, youth, beauty and gaiety, are but worthless, though shining attributes."

Mrs. Barbara understood the practice better than the precept—how to *act*, better than how to comment, and left to Mrs. Egerton the rare union of conduct and of maxim.

When the poor cripple rose to depart, her limping gait attracted Mrs. Egerton's attention.—"You must not go alone."

"I am sorry Susan is not here, to give you her arm," said Mrs. Mary.

Susan had in fact disappeared at the first glimpse of the "tiresome old maid," though, be it known, the tiresome old maid had come that morning, purposely "to relieve pretty Miss Susan," and to give that young lady an opportunity of walking abroad.

What was to be done?—"You shall accept my arm," said Mrs. Egerton.

"You, madam! *you* creeping through the village to succour *me!*"

Mrs. Egerton sighed to think how little kindness this benevolent being must have experienced, to justify this exclamation of surprise; and Mrs. Mary smiled at the accent placed on the two pronouns, me and you—the difference between *meum* and *tuum* had never before met her ear so distinguished.

Mrs. Barbara, to her increased dismay, discovered that she had not to combat with a benevolence that exhausted itself in words, or satisfied itself with professions, and soon found herself "creeping through the village," leaning on the arm of the young,

young, the lovely, the elegant Mrs. Egerton.

Many were the walkers on that eventful day. Susan Knowlesdon, with some of her giddy associates, intended, and indeed attempted, to titter contempt as they passed; but a something within—a something over which they had no control, silenced their giggling, and they passed the pair, constrained and reproved.

Lady Wronghead, judging by her own feelings, with much delicate consideration, designed to spare Mrs. Egerton's, by pretending not to see her, nor the disgraceful duty in which she was engaged.

But the stupid Helena, unmindful of the kind intention, stopped her polite ladyship, and exchanged with her the salutation of the morning, a courtesy lady Wronghead would willingly have declined.

Miss Clementina Wronghead, on whose arm leant the superbly dressed lady Ruthven, adroitly looked another way, and was so engrossed in admiring the soap and can-

dles in a chandler's shop, that she could neither see Mrs. Egerton, nor hear her audible " good-morrow."

Miss Patty Muddleton, following in the rear, leading one of the " sweet little Ruthvens," and chatting with the noble earl, marked the skilful manœuvre of her niece, and had already fixed upon the pots and pans of a brazier's shop, on which to place her regards, at the dreaded encounter.

Unhappily, poor Miss Patty, more prompt in imitation than invention, was not so circumstanced as to profit by this felicitous arrangement. The parties met indeed before the attractive brazier's shop; but—who can guard against all contingencies?—an ill-natured wheelbarrow obstructed the footpath.

Mrs. Egerton was aware that her crippled companion could not safely forego the smooth pavement; she therefore paused t'll the obstacle could be removed.

Miss Patty did not anticipate the pleasure of this *tête-à-tête* meeting; and, in spite

spite of the innumerable joints in the neck, and the admirable power of movement, so vaunted by anatomists, could not discover a mode of averting the head so as to avoid the open glance of Helena—nor did any other contrivance occur to her, though we could have helped her to a dozen.

How easily she might have stooped, as if her shoe-string wanted tying, bent down to whisper to the "sweet little Ruthven," laughed or coughed violently—even a fit of sneezing had served her turn; but none of these bright subterfuges popped into the head of the lady; and, to add to her disasters ("let it not be named in Gath!") under the rose, Mrs. Barbara Maude was first cousin, without any remove, to Miss Patty Muddleton, and, worse than all, had an unlucky habit of calling things by their names.

"La, cousin, how do you do?"

Let the woman of feeling, unjustly accused of cruelty—the man of honour, ma-

liciously pronounced dishonourable—No, we are wrong—indignation were here legitimate. Rather let the worthless wife, long glorying in impunity, when first convicted of her guilt—let the systematic slanderer, boastful of his affected truth, just detected in falsehood—let these, and such as these, recal the anguish of their shame, and they may faintly image the consternation of Miss Patty Muddleton.

She spoke not—she moved not; some very inquisitive glances from her noble attendant appeared to increase her agitation. It has been whispered to us, but we do not announce it as a fact, the noble lord had just before inquired who was that miserable object? and that Miss Patty had succinctly replied that, *upon her honour!* she did not know.

Mrs. Egerton was awakened from her benevolent belief that Mrs. Barbara had made a mistake, by the second exclamation of that good woman.

"There

"There now—I see I have vexed her! Well, I am very sorry—she often tells me I must not speak so loud in company."

Poor Miss Patty! she sickened beneath the calm contempt of Mrs. Egerton's speaking glance, and splashing through the kennel, rushed forwards.

Womanly curiosity, that bane of womanly repose, gave new pangs to her humiliation, when, looking back upon the party, she beheld his right honourable lordship, with his two right honourable hands, actually removing the obtruding wheelbarrow. Nor were the loud and reiterated thanks of the grateful cripple, nor the graceful move with which Mrs. Egerton acknowledged the courtesy, lost upon her—all, all were thorns and thistles to her fretted bosom. Little even did she approve the sort of exulting smile, with which his lordship, when he again joined her, announced his happiness in having been instrumental to the service of "her worthy cousin."

At the bottom of the village stood the newly-arrived Mr. Knowlesdon, a mirthful spectator of the scene.—" Your experiment was too severe," said he, drawing the pressing arm of Mrs. Barbara from Mrs. Egerton's into his own ; " good Miss Patty was in her boiling point, when in contact with the earl, and you too abruptly sunk her to the freezing point by the approximation of Mrs. Barbara. There is no thermometer in the world that can bear such rapid changes without powerful agitation."

He then proceeded, as he slowly moved towards Mrs. Barbara's humble dwelling, to give many instances of Miss Muddleton's exquisite sensibility: how he once had discovered the bankruptcy of a tradesman, by the chill glance that took place of Miss Patty's usual warm salutation (N. B. the man was a bachelor), and how he had also ascertained the truth of a floating rumour, that a certain youth was left sole heir

heir to his uncle, by her cool curtsey being transformed into a glowing shake of the hand.

Laughing, they reached Mrs. Maude's abode. The little apartment, generally neat and well-arranged, was in a state of disorder, the glass had been removed from its nail, and the table was scattered with curl-papers, combs, and pins.

"Bless us! here's a confusion!" said Mrs. Barbara, instantly occupying herself in replacing the glass, and removing the heterogeneous articles from the table.

"Your children have been playing sad tricks here," said the solicitor.

"Children!" exclaimed Mrs. Egerton.

"Did you not know Miss Barbara had a family?" answered the solicitor.

"La! bless you, my dear sir, they are none of mine! only two orphans, bequeathed to me by a dead pennyless brother. Oh, how much have I to be thankful for, in being able to maintain them, poorly indeed, but decently!"

It was a picture worthy the pen of a philosopher—it was a picture worthy the pencil of an artist—an infirm, aged, suffering female, bereft of affluence, and bowed down by disease, thanking her Maker—for what? the privilege of sharing her pittance with the fatherless, and those who had no other helper.

Tears of veneration rolled in large drops down the cheeks of Helena—even the hardy solicitor, "albeit unused to the melting mood," twinkled away a tear, that *would* rise as he said—"And so these children of yours derange your household?"

"Heaven bless them! not they, for they are at school hard by—No, this is cousin Patty's doing; she often steps in here to right herself, after her dirty walk from the Hall."

"Ungrateful woman!" burst from the lips of Mr. Knowlesdon; and, did we love the language of metaphor, we might say how the rosy glow of indignation dried the tear of pity on the cheek of Helena.

But

But perhaps our readers may think we are altogether dealing in metaphor, and while some may deem the contented and generous cripple as a character out of nature, others may as stoutly deny the existence of such a mean, cold-blooded, selfish mortal, as Miss Patty Muddleton.

Reader, have you never seen the poor helping the poorer? the weak assisting the weaker? Reader, have you never beheld merit shunned because obscure? virtue disdained because coupled with poverty? Have you never marked the prosperous avoid the unfortunate? the friend, the relative scorned when associated with the vulgar or the poor? Have you never known the kindness that was courted in privacy derided in public scenes?

For our own parts, we never could discover why people should be ashamed of poverty, or proud of opulence: in nine cases out of ten, chance, not virtue, determines the assignment. Were poverty the necessary attendant of vice, our wonder at

its avoidance would cease; but since it is a dispensation over which we have little power, to be proud of wealth or rank is a tacit confession that these adventitious advantages are all we possess to distinguish us from our fellow-creatures.

We *have* seen titled mortals, whom we have heartily despised—we *have* shunned the disgraceful notice of wealth, and courted the ennobling esteem of the poor; and we gladly announce, that we *have* also beheld nobles whose least honour was their coronets, and rich men whose smallest distinction was their wealth.

Dare we for once, and only once, tack a moral to our tale—"Dignity is not lost by humble, but by vicious connexions."

CHAP-

CHAPTER XIX.

Criticism on Criticisms.

THERE is hardly any thing more entertaining* than the misrepresentations intentionally or unintentionally circulated in chit-chat—it produces such a charming variety in conversation, in the different alterations given to the same detail: like playing a favourite air with variations, or singing a ballad with *ad libitum cadenzoes*, the change of a look, of a word—the misplacing of a pause, of an accent, produces an incalculable alteration in the original speech, and diffuses the charm of novelty in the intercourse of social life.

Thus, when Mrs. A. tells Mrs. B. that she heard Mrs. C. the other day declare, that

* We had nearly made a grand mistake and written "mischievous."

that " the Misses B. were most uncommon girls!" by the addition of a certain tone, a certain accent on the adjective, she makes it appear that the young ladies were deemed uncommon in the sense of oddness, for the plainness of their features or the awkwardness of their address, when poor Mrs. C. meant to approve them as singularly pretty or agreeable.

Or when Mrs. D. informs Mrs. E. that Mrs. F. marvelled much that Mr. E. *only* gave five pounds, by the gratuitous insertion of the little dissyllable " only," she causes the partial wife to conclude that her spouse has been censured for parsimony, when in fact he was praised for liberality.

It is said, that whenever a speech admits of two significations, the French invariably accept the more courteous, as the one intended. In the rage for imitating that polite nation, it would be happy if, with their costume, we caught the suavity of their manners, and in this particular imbibed the spirit of their conversation. How

far

far such a disposition to understand every phrase in its kindest meaning conduces to their refinement and hilarity, is a question worthy discussion, it being a stubborn fact, that the opposite propensity, the tendency to imagine censure, and fancy rudeness, so prevalent in messieurs and mesdames *Angloises*, is the common source of all the disagreements and heart-burnings that destroy social unanimity.

It seems a harsh, but it would really be a most infallible remedy, to that class of dissensions caused and propagated by repetition, to introduce a system of never repeating a single sentence that is spoken. We can easily imagine the consternation and displeasure with which such a proposal would be received.—"What! are we never to speak a word!" Stay, ladies (for *of course* it is only the softer sex that will suffer by any curtailment in the privileges of talking), stay! we would not, for the world, silence the pretty sounds of your sweet voices; but suppose we ask you to talk

talk about *things*, rather than *persons*—suppose you make general, rather than personal observations?

Shudder not at this limitation, for many valuable subjects for discourse may still be enjoyed: you may talk eternally of feathers, flowers, and trinkets, if you meddle not with those who wear them—you may descant for ever on modes and fashions, if you pass unnoticed those who adopt them. We will heartily agree with you, that gowns without tuckers, and petticoats some inches above the ancle, are highly indecorous; but we will not go on with you, to pronounce Miss G. the most shameless damsel in the world, for sporting the first, or Mrs. H. the most graceless of matrons, for adopting the last. We will cheerfully agree with you, that pearls and diamonds form very handsome ornaments, and that feathers and flowers look very gay; but we will not have any thing to say to you, if you proceed to comment on the impropriety of Mrs. L. the tradesman's

tradesman's wife, decking herself with the one, or Mrs. K. the ancient widow, flaunting in the other.

"Then are we never to talk of our neighbours?" Oh, by all means! talk of them incessantly—let their actions, their sentiments, be for ever on your lips, with this restriction only, that you bound your recollections to their *good* actions, their kind sentiments—how very charitable lady M. is to her neighbours—how very kind Miss N. is to her sisters, &c. &c. &c.

But, to illustrate our position by our story:—at the very first visit Mrs. Mansel paid at the abbey, after the late curious scene in the village, she made a point of censuring the conduct of the Wronghead family, especially Miss Patty's, which she had attentively observed from her drawing-room window.

How she might have acted herself, under similar circumstances, she paused not to consider, and in the warmth of her virtuous indignation, "remembered to forget" how

how confounded she herself looked when lord Ruthven once espied her helping the poor cripple over a kennel. Query—would the woman who blushed to be seen performing an act of charity, have hardily dared an act of courtesy?

Mrs. Egerton, from charitable, not cautious motives, would willingly have avoided the subject—she could not say any thing commendable, and she would not say any thing severe.

Mrs. Mansel, however, seemed resolved to enforce her opinion, and at last drew from her a slight, a very slight censure, a gentle reprimand, calculated to rouse slumbering virtue, but not irritate hardened guilt.*

Had it been heard exactly as it was originally spoken, the mind of Miss Muddleton might have imbibed a truth, as well as a maxim—might have seen her error, its easy detection, and its easy cure. Unhappily

* What if only such censures were expressed, as, if heard, might inform, sooth, and amend the offending party?

pily the experiment was never made; most of the words indeed met the offender's ear, but the sweet smile, the pitying accents with which they were accompanied, were lost in the transmission.

Mrs. Mansel, after quitting the Abbey, called at the Hall. She did not do so from any regular plan of espionage, for she was a chance-medley scandal-monger, and it was with even less forethought that she tattled over at one mansion the ideas she had collected in the other. Now Mrs. Mansel never had to boast a superabundance of head-furniture, and therefore it was natural she should retail the few notions she did accumulate as quickly as possible.

The Wronghead family had the full advantage of all Mrs. Mansel had heard at Thurleston; and as the account seemed to awaken considerable interest, she very obligingly garnished her twice-told tale with every embellishment that could render it amusing to her auditors.

Among the multiplicity of "says I's," and

and "says she's," it was impossible to draw up a statement sufficiently accurate to be inserted in our true history: thus, as quacks, without making public the several ingredients of their infallible essences, are content to assert only their important effects, so we, without laying open the exact words of the conversation, shall simply state its results—Miss Patty was irretrievably offended.

A few mornings intervened. Mrs. Egerton was rambling in the park with her children, sharing in their gambols, and encouraging their activity—she had just knelt down, to tie her little Frank's shoestring, when Miss Muddleton brushed past, close behind her.

Now, though Moliere has hinted that the heart sometimes is not on the left side, and experience suggests that, with some people, the heart is neither there nor anywhere else, yet it has never yet been asserted, that the eyes were anywhere but under the brow—not the most daring theorist

theorist has presumed to argue, that, judging from analogy, because flies can see all round, that therefore human beings can, or ought to do so too; yet certain it is, Miss Muddleton very positively affirmed, that "Mrs. Egerton would not speak to her, though she must have seen her, for she passed so close, their gowns brushed each other."

Of Miss Patty's exemplary correctness, we have already given abundant proof—and that, in this instance, she spoke truth, as far as she went, every one must allow. Some may impertinently observe, that here she preserved the letter, rather than the spirit of the law; for though she might have sworn to the veracity of the statement without risk of perjury, who could have supposed she meant *the back of the gown?*

Was it a consciousness of deserving to be shunned, that caused this hasty belief of it? We leave this question for the mature

deliberation

deliberation of our readers—they shall decide for us, whether the innocent or the guilty are the first to shew marks of shamefacedness—the first to fancy contempt and censure.

The parties met in the saloon of Random Hall.—Miss Patty was all well-bred ease and Christian formality—nothing could exceed the politeness of her manners, except the acrimony of her feelings.

Mrs. Egerton was pretty much as usual—perhaps not quite so cordial to Miss Muddleton, as she was wont to be to all her fellow-creatures. Mrs. Barbara Maude was yet fresh in her memory, but she checked every propensity to open or disguised enmity—no keen irony dropped from her lips, no concealed sarcasm was expressed in her discourse.

Mr. Knowlesdon was angry at this unmerited gentleness, and called it a deficiency of energy in the cause of virtue; and so, no doubt, will many of our readers, who, kind

kind souls! love to be honest, dare* to say what they dare to think—do not shrink from avowing their sentiments, though at the risk of wounding a friend—though, peradventure, their spirited remarks give many a pang, and raise many an enemy.

The solicitor called the next day at the abbey.—"My dear Mrs. Egerton, why did you not make that woman feel her error?"

"She looked as if she did, without any comment from me."

"But a good biting speech would have probed her conscience."

"And rankled there for ever," said Mrs. Egerton.

"She would never have forgotten it."

"And never have forgiven it."

"She would have remembered it to the last day of her life."

"And hated me for it to the last day of her life."

"Well,

* But why boast of presuming to think and act uncharitably?

"Well, and what would that signify?"

"Nothing—but the unchristianness of the sentiment thereby incurred," said Mrs. Egerton; "I would not willingly hate or be hated by any living creature."

"But an air of contempt towards her would have justly humbled her."

"Nothing is so unforgivable as contempt; it is a weapon, therefore, I never use."

"Well then, an angry remonstrance."

"Pardon me—the wise need no remonstrance; on the foolish it would be thrown away."

"Then what would you do?"

Mrs. Mary answered her brother—"As much as possible, live peaceably with all men."

"But at this rate, Mrs. Egerton, you make no difference between right and wrong—between those you respect and those you despise."

"I had hoped that yesterday I gave ostensible proofs of the distinction of my feelings

feelings towards your sister, Mrs. Mary Knowlesdon, and Miss Patty Muddleton."

"True, true—forgive me! Nothing could be more marked than your frank cordiality to the one, and your cool civility to the other; yet I do wish that you had given madam Martha a few severe reprimands, just to do her good."

"My dear Mr. Knowlesdon, do you in seriousness believe that error was ever corrected by sarcastic repartee, or amendment induced by pointed irony?"

Mr. Knowlesdon meditated upon the question, whilst Mrs. Egerton pursued her remarks.

"It strikes me, satire is indulged rather to gratify the satirist than with any intention of benefiting the satirized—to shew sense at the price of benevolence."

"I believe you are right; yet witty censure may be likened to flinging vinegar on a green wound—a smart application, indeed, but it may retard the growth of peccant humours," exclaimed Mr. Knowlesdon.

"But where emollients can serve the turn, he would be a harsh physician who would prescribe the sharper remedy," replied Mrs. Egerton.

"Excellent!" said the solicitor; "where did you learn this creed? where did you gain this reasoning?"

"Not from a Cicero or a Demosthenes, but from yet higher authority," said Mrs. Mary.

The solicitor looked incredulous, but his sister closed her period.

"From the simple, the beautiful code of Christian morality—that pure, that only fountain of all that is wise, virtuous, and holy!"

Mr. Knowlesdon was touched by her enthusiasm, and affectionately pressing her hand, exclaimed—"Who, my dear Mary, who shall doubt the purity, the efficiency of a creed, by which such a life as yours has been regulated—by which such sentiments as your friend's have been inculcated?"

Mr. Knowlesdon was a man of strong understanding

understanding and extensive information, sufficiently wise to be diffident of his opinions—sufficiently learned to be aware of his ignorance; he had read much, and he had thought more—he was religious from feeling as well as conviction; he had heard many eloquent preachers, he had read many eloquent sermons, yet he has been frequently known to declare, that his heart was never so profoundly, so beneficially touched, as by this simple comment of his sister's. It was the beautiful union of precept and example—it was practice enforcing theory. From that moment he felt more eager than before to draw his maxims from the same source, to fashion his opinions and conduct by the same rules, to anchor his hopes on the same immoveable rock; and often, amidst the temptations, the struggles, the vicissitudes of his after life, he looked back upon this moment to sooth his irritation, sustain his fortitude, "to give him the power of endurance."

How many of his sex might be so awakened, so instructed, were woman what she ought to be—the practical commentator, the practical promulgator of the Christian doctrine—mild, humble, cheerful, pious!

CHAPTER XX.

A Beau celebrated and a Belle scolded.

Susan Knowlesdon, about this time, read Ossian's Poems, and without troubling herself respecting their author, dashed off the following lines:—

"*SONNET ON READING OSSIAN.*

"Enchanting bard! thy boldly-soaring note,
Caught from the beauties of thy native clime,
Where, on some mountain's brow, thou sittst sublime,
And markst the transient glories as they float—

Thy

Thy pencil, dipt in Nature's varied dyes,
Paints varied Nature in her changing forms:
Now high thou wrapst the soul in gathering storms,
Now bidst it smile beneath unclouded skies;
At thy command the blushing flow'rets bloom,
And weave their lovely garlands, sweetly mild;
At thy command the deepening horrors gloom,
And shrieking Loda answers to the wind!
Enchanting bard! rude Scotia's peerless* child!
Bright emanation of th' Eternal mind!"

The way in which this irregular sonnet was written may offer some excuse for its many defects. Susan had retired to bed, after a day's close reading of the Bard of Scotia; and on her aunt's unexpectedly entering her chamber, started from her pillow, and requested to have some paper and a pencil given to her.

Mrs. Mary, believing her niece dreaming, would have retired without obliging

 her,

* This expression denotes Susan unacquainted with Burns, whilst the next line speaks her acquainted with Plato.

her, but Susan repeated her request in such earnest tones, that Mrs. Mary at length complied, and handed to her a sheet of paper that lay on her dressing-table.

Susan rapidly scribbled the lines which, "with all their imperfections on their head," we have given to our readers, and then very calmly lay down and fell asleep.

Mrs. Mary produced the poem the next morning at the breakfast-table, and as Mr. Knowlesdon said nothing worse of it, than "that it was not poetry," Susan would have escaped further remark, had not the paper unluckily contained other less objectionable lines.

Now these other "rhyming lines," for we will not profane the word poetry by so appropriating it, caused Susan to receive so severe a lecture from the solicitor, that, poor girl! she mentally vowed her pen should never more adventure the dangerous field of satire.

After giving such a mysterious account of

of this reprehensible composition, we must have roused a double portion of curiosity, inasmuch as we affect secrecy, and as, moreover, we confess that the concealed verses were satirical, and unfit for publication. Could curiosity be more deliciously or more acutely aroused? Had we studied for a twelvemonth, could we have hit upon a more ingenious and efficacious mode of giving consequence and celebrity to the composition? Did we intend to publish again, the very hint that our new work contained "*the* lines," would, undoubtedly, ensure its rapid sale; but, in spite of the probable objections we foresee from our publishers, we will, with unparalleled generosity, give them here.

Susan had seen a favourite friend neglected, at a gay ball, by a *soi-disant* tip-top beau, and in wrathful mood wrote, and widely circulated, the following *jeu-d'esprit* on the occasion :—

TO A—— T—— W——, ESQ.

" Dressed all in black, with bright new yellow gloves,
His hair, Adonis-like, curled by the loves,
With roseate blushes, reddening to his ears,
Young Macaroni the divine appears.
The ladies all declare he's quite the thing,
And whispering praises circle round the ring.
But see, he dances! what a spring was there!
Light as a cork, and trackless as the air!
'Tis past all praise—all words are cold and dead,
His heels, oh wond'rous! lighter than his head!"

As a great secret, we will just tell our most particular friends (but they must not mention it to any body but their own particular friends), that the above hero, if they have not already discovered it, was Timotheus Adam Wronghead, Esq.

The wound inflicted, however, was by no means so severe as the solicitor had supposed; for Adam Wronghead, Esq. thought the " Adonis-like," " the divine," " the whispering praises," were more than an equivalent for the slight blemish hinted in the last line.

Susan's

Susan's chastisement came from a very different quarter; for besides robbing her of the attentions of a certain dashing ensign, who, in spite of the public voice giving the verses to the heir of Random Hall, could not help wincing under the lash of the impromptu, forgetful that by his doing so, he marked the justness of the appropriation — besides this misfortune (for Susan then thought it a misfortune), another assailed her: her heretofore devoted and impassioned lover, the sportive Jack, though he laughed heartily at the wit, felt angry with the severity of Susan's Pegasus; and if, in after days, he had not discovered that the fair poetess was really good-tempered, and had written these verses in a moment of very uncommon spleen, it is ten to one but these half-score lines had wrenched her from his heart for ever—an event which, however indifferent to her at that moment, we shall see was of vital importance to her future

future fate—So much harm may be done by the flourish of a pen!

> "Ah! then, ye scribbling fair,
> Of satire's wit beware!"

The reader may make this a quotation, by putting to it the name of any favourite author; by affixing that of Dr. Samuel Johnson, he can at once exalt the couplet into a maxim.

But why was the solicitor so severe upon poor Susán's muse? and why was Susan so severe upon 'squire Adam? The answers to these two questions depend upon each other.

Mr. Knowlesdon was angry, not only with the indulgence of satire, but with the selection of the object at whom it was pointed.

Adam Wronghead, Esq. had never been guilty of making love to Susan, but he had made her an offer. He thought no woman in her senses could refuse such a handsome fellow; probably he thought no woman

woman could refuse a chance of dear matrimony—a chance which all the sex have the credit of seeking, from the cradle to the grave.

Susan convinced him that he built upon false premises—that *all* women are not to be caught by mere outside—that *all* women "do not live, move, and have their being," with the sole aim of entrapping their male acquaintance into the holy bands of marriage.

Susan unequivocally rejected him. So far we cannot seriously blame her, for *perhaps* she was right, in deeming an empty-headed and cold-hearted coxcomb unworthy her vows of love, honour, and obedience—*perhaps* she was right in thinking his expected title and noble fortune no equivalent for the absence of sense and feeling.

But what caused Mr. Knowlesdon's anger was her publishing his proposals and her refusal—her selection of him as the butt for the arrows of her wit—as the object to encounter

encounter her contempt and derision.—"Susan, a man that makes proposals of marriage to a woman pays her the highest compliment in his power, and ought therefore to receive gratitude, not contempt—contempt can only attach to him for choosing ill: thus the disdain recoils on her who expresses it. But I am ashamed of you—Why did you draw your cousin into proposals you had resolved to reject? Be assured, every woman who does so feeds her vanity at the expence of her delicacy and good sense; she may thereby count many lovers, but she will boast few friends, and fewer admirers."

So ended the remonstrance caused by the appearance of the lines—not but that Susan had heard something very like it many times before, from the same quarter; but the solicitor seemed to think he could not too frequently repeat his censures and monitions on this subject, and as we are quite of his opinion, we have recorded his latest strictures.

Jack

Jack also admired his pretty cousin; but though he was always making love, he had never yet made an offer—thus proving, that as in proportion to the civilization of a country women are respected, in proportion to the refinement of heart and mind in man, women are best loved and honoured. Coxcombs alone despise them—wise men feel and acknowledge their merits and their claims.

END OF VOL. I.

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